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# **Young People, Youth Work and Social Justice: A Participatory Parity Perspective**

Alan Mackie

A Thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of University of Edinburgh for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy



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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores issues of social injustice impacting on a sample group of young people living in a Scottish community and critically examines their experiences on the periphery of the labour market. Existing research evidence has highlighted myriad issues impacting on young people as they struggle to make the transition to adulthood. Young people in the UK have been particularly impacted by the economic turbulence of recent years with stagnating wages, higher rates of unemployment compared to older age groups, an increase in precarious employment and a gradual erosion of welfare entitlement. Allied to this, unemployed youth continue to be disparaged in popular discourse, labelled amongst other things as feckless and idle. As a consequence, there is evidence that young people on the margins of society are disengaging from formal politics, feeling alienated from an arena that they also see as disconnected from their everyday lives.

This thesis uses the framework of social justice as conceived by Nancy Fraser to critically analyse perceived injustices affecting the lives of young people. These issues manifest across all three spheres of injustice as identified by Fraser; the economic, the cultural and the political spheres of social life - what she calls the domains of redistribution, recognition and representation, respectively. The findings of my research study confirms that Fraser's framework not only allows us to bring together the multiple injustices impacting on these young people's lives, but helps to reveal the ways in which they overlap and interpenetrate, reinforcing marginalisation.

Fraser's framework is also utilised as a lens through which to analyse and understand the context within which practitioners working with the young people are operating. As many writers in the area of youth work argue, it is an ethical requirement that the practice supports young people towards addressing any injustices impacting on their lives. This study finds that the ability of practitioners to respond to the issues of injustice in the lives of the young people is compromised by a performative landscape centred on meeting pre-ordained targets and outcomes.





## **Lay Summary**

This thesis presents the findings of two discrete but connected areas of study. First, I interviewed a group young people living in Scotland. The findings reveal issues of injustice impacting on their lives. Second, I interviewed youth workers and analysed whether the work they do addresses the issues of injustice faced by the young people they work with.

For both groups, the concept of social justice as developed by critical theorist Nancy Fraser was used as a tool to analyse and understand the data from the interviews. Fraser's framework of social justice is divided into three areas – redistribution, recognition and representation, in other words the economic, the cultural and the political spheres, respectively. The evidence presented in this thesis confirms that the young people who participated in the study are experiencing multiple injustices. Nancy Fraser's framework helps to reveal the ways in which the three spheres overlap and combine to cement the young people's marginalisation.

An extensive review of literature highlights an ethical requirement for youth workers to address injustices in the lives of the young people they work with. However, existing research evidence tells us this is becoming increasingly difficult as practitioners find themselves beholden to work towards targets defined by funding bodies, rather than addressing issues identified by the young people. The data gathered from my study shows this to be the case for the practitioners interviewed. Fraser's framework was useful in assessing the ways in which wider factors limit the practitioner's ability to respond to the multiple injustices the young people face.



### **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Signed

*Alan Mackie*

Alan Mackie



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to all the young people and practitioners who participated in the fieldwork element of this research. Their generosity in sharing their time and deeply personal experiences are something that I cannot ever hope to repay. I hope that I was at least able to listen and reflect on these with care, respect and dignity and do justice to their contributions.

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This work was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) [grant number ES/J500136/1]. I would like to thank the ESRC for giving me the opportunity to undertake this research. I would not have been able to do it without their funding.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my partner, Megan. Her continuous support, encouragement and unconditional love have sustained me throughout this thesis. My academic journey began when Megan encouraged me to apply to evening classes back in 2006. For someone who left school with few qualifications, I could never have imagined submitting a PhD thesis. That this is the case is down primarily to Megan's love, support and belief in me.



## Chapter 1 – Introducing the Thesis

### 1.1 What is this study about?

Young people as a group have very much been overlooked in terms of social justice theory and the current context presents a timely opportunity to rectify this. In the UK, young people have particularly suffered in recent times as their wages stagnate in comparison to older age groups, their access to the most rudimentary of welfare has diminished and fewer good jobs are available, particularly for those leaving school at the earliest opportunity (McDowell, 2003; Côté and Bynner, 2008; Standing, 2014; Sukarieh and Tannock, 2015a). Moreover, young people are the victims of disparaging language and increasingly find themselves labelled in pejorative terms in popular media (called scum, undeserving, irresponsible) and in policy where non-participation in society is pathologised in terms such as ‘StatusZero’, ‘at-risk’ and ‘NEET<sup>1</sup>’ (Williamson, 1999; France, 2009; Standing, 2014; McKay and Atherton, 2018). Indeed, Côté (2014a) has recently argued that:

...as a result of several decades of this negative treatment, declining status, and targeting as legitimate targets of exploitative labour practices, the youth segment of the work force...now constitutes one of the most economically disadvantaged groups of the entire population and very few people object to this situation, seeing it as normal and justified. (p540)

Allied to these factors, young people are said to have been ‘tuning out’ of formal politics, the arena where such issues could be challenged. Research consistently finds that contemporary youth feel disaffected with formal politics, are voting less and the proportion joining political parties has declined significantly (Rainsford, 2014; Bastedo, 2015; Briggs, 2017; Dempsey and Johnston, 2018). Blame for this situation is often pinned on young people with the result that they are labelled as apathetic, selfish and even anti-political (Henn and Foard, 2014; Hopkins and Todd, 2015; Sloam and Henn, 2019). Denied a political voice, young people subsequently become absent from the decision-making processes that impact on their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Not in education, employment or training



The above are all profound issues of social justice. The absence of a systematic analysis bringing these issues together, through the application of a theory of social justice, is argued here to be an omission in academic literature. Therefore, I examined the experiences of a group of young people and asked what social justice issues exist for them? To undertake this I used the framework of social justice developed by Nancy Fraser as a lens through which to analyse these experiences. Nancy Fraser is a philosopher and political scientist who has developed a critical framework of social justice building on the likes of Habermas, Marx, and Weber (Fraser et al, 2012). Her approach has been developed in dialogue with Habermas (Fraser, 1990; 1997a), Iris Marion Young (Fraser, 1995a; 1997b), Judith Butler (Fraser, 1998), Axel Honneth (Fraser and Honneth, 2003), and in a collection with various other critics (Fraser, 2008a). Over the last two decades, Fraser's framework has been expanded and refined through this ongoing dialogue into a potent tool for analysing and evaluating the legitimacy of social arrangements.

Fundamentally, Fraser's framework is a model designed to reveal *injustice* (Bufacchi, 2012; Power, 2012). It is the concept of *participatory parity* that is the normative core of her framework. According to this standard, social arrangements should be arranged in a way that allows individuals the ability to participate in social life as peers with their fellow social actors (Fraser, 2005a). Fraser's critical lens paves the way for a comprehensive critique of whether or not this is the case. The framework is three-dimensional, developed around the economic, the cultural and the political spheres of social life - what she calls the domains of redistribution, recognition and representation, respectively. Fraser (2016a) summarises her theory:

...for me the sort of normative principle that is fundamental for questions of justice is the idea of *parity of participation*. So in condemning forms of maldistribution, or misrecognition, or misrepresentation, the idea is that these are states of affairs, situations that block some people from participating on a par with others so they violate the norm of parity of participation. (p321 – *emphasis in original*)

Such a critical approach to examining issues of injustice focuses on the structural-institutional framework which, she writes, is the foundation that sets the rules for and regulates social interaction. She (2012) argues that justice is the 'first virtue...it is only by overcoming institutionalized injustice that we can create the ground on which other

virtues, both societal and individual, can flourish' (p42). Fraser (2011) asks us not to solely focus on the formal structures that govern interaction but also those informal customs or social practices that permeate civil society and can be just as powerful as any official law-making body. Her model allows us to focus on the structures of society that circumscribe and influence the lives of the young people interviewed for this study. It is these institutional arrangements which work to deny individuals and groups the resources (economic, cultural or political) that impact on their ability to achieve participatory parity with their fellow citizens.

My application of Fraser's framework to analyse the lives of the young people in this study was only one aim of this investigation, however. The second aim was to use Fraser's theory of justice to analyse the relationship between policy and practice for practitioners working with young people. For practitioners it is crucial that they; first, understand the lives of the young people they work with and; second, any work addresses the multiple injustices that can impact on their lives. As many writers note, these are essential *ethical* requirements of youth work practice (Jeffs and Banks, 2010; Spatscheck, 2016; Jeffs, 2017).

However, the problem, as suggested by Mason (2015), is that 'in the contemporary political and socio-economic context youth workers and volunteers are faced with the dichotomy of meeting targeted, intervention based policy agendas and maintaining the core principles that form the foundation of youth work' (p55). Many writers note that this dilemma has led to a sort of 'youth work paradox.' The practice intervention is valued as practitioners are able to effectively engage with 'hard-to-reach' young people aided by underlying key principles – relationship, conversation and the informal educational process. However, such attributes are extremely challenging to develop and utilise in an environment dominated by short-term funding, accountability and the target-driven culture of state-sponsored provision (Ord, 2007; Dunne et al, 2014; Taru et al, 2014; Jeffs, 2017). And this is important in terms of addressing social injustice in the lives of young people as the broader context can limit the ability of practitioners 'starting where young people are at' (Davies, 2015). Only by understanding the context of young people's lives can practitioners truly begin to build a picture of any injustices impinging on their ability to participate as full members of their community (Spence, 2007). It is crucial to examine the contemporary context that practitioners are

operating within and critically assess their ability to engage with young people in a way that addresses any injustices they may encounter.

In the contemporary context, youth workers increasingly find themselves working to an agenda which can have a narrow economic focus. That is, either directly delivering employability work, signposting young people to employability programmes or delivering outcome-focused work that relates to accreditation or attainment (Slovenko and Thompson, 2016; de St. Croix, 2018). Indeed, current government policy suggests that youth work has an important part to play in the employability agenda in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012a; 2014; 2018a). However, many writers suggest that working towards pre-determined outcomes and accreditation runs contrary to what is argued to be the ethos of youth work, which is argued to be a holistic endeavour, looking at the spiritual, emotional, social and political development of young people – not just the economic (Mairesse, 2009; Mboyi, 2010; Cooper, 2012; Taylor, 2015). As a result aspects of practice can no longer be characterised as ‘youth work’ (Taylor, 2009; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). In light of this and to avoid any contestation, throughout this thesis workers will be referred to as ‘practitioners working with young people.’

Fraser’s framework has been used to analyse the experiences of Gypsies (Pallai, 2003), children (Bozalek, 2011), Indigenous groups (Elliot, 2016), ethnic minorities (Veliquette, 2018) and young people with disabilities (Gale and Bolzan, 2016). Of course, this list is far from exhaustive but after a thorough search it does not appear that Fraser’s framework has been trained on the experience of young adults more generally. Likewise, her critical approach has been used to interrogate the disciplines of teaching (Leibowitz and Bozalek, 2016; McIntyre et al., 2018), social work (Garrett, 2010), social policy (Mackie and Tett, 2013) and mental health (Oh, 2014). It is my contention that the application of Fraser’s theory of justice to analyse (1) the lives of young people and (2) the response of youth work means the twin focus of this study encompasses an original work and a distinctive contribution to knowledge.

## **1.2 Why am I interested?**

There are three reasons why I am interested in studying the issues covered in this thesis – which are personal, professional and academic. First I have a personal interest in these issues as prior to my time in academia I was a practitioner working with young

people and, indeed, lived and worked in the area under scrutiny for approximately three years. Second, this connects to my professional interest as during my time in the field I felt unable to turn my full attention to the issues impacting on the young people. This was due to the more performative aspects of a job centred on targets and outcomes I had to meet as a condition of our funding. These were primarily employability focused and an impediment to responding to the young people's immediate interests. This connects, thirdly, to my academic interests. My time in academia has allowed me to reflect on these experiences and develop an analysis of the issues that both young people and practitioners working with young people face in the contemporary context.

### **1.3 The context**

The young people in this research are from one discrete community in Scotland – named anonymously as *Porttown*. As will be discussed further in chapter 5, Porttown is an interesting and topical community to focus upon as it has been an area of dramatic change over the last half century. Many of the processes discussed in the sociological literature – deindustrialisation, gentrification and inequality (McDowell, 2010; Hancock and Mooney, 2013; Dillabough et al, 2014; Fraser et al, 2017) mean that Porttown is a useful backdrop to analyse the impact of these processes in terms of justice, acting as a kind of localised microcosm of many of these issues.

It is also interesting at this point to highlight the policy context relating to youth work in Scotland. The Scottish National Party (SNP) has been the dominant party in Scottish politics since 2007 when it led a minority government until 2011 since which time it has been the majority Scottish government (Arnott and Ozga, 2016; Wiggan, 2017). As a result, it has had over a decade to put its stamp on the educational landscape in Scotland. Although the majority of welfare powers are still administered by the UK government, education and employability policy are devolved and are the responsibility of the Scottish government.

In terms of social justice, the social policy imperatives driven by the SNP-led government are interesting to consider. There is a 'twin discourse' at work and Arnott and Ozga (2016) draw attention to this:

The first is economy-driven, foregrounding economic growth, referencing skills, smartness and success. It is a discourse of competitiveness at a general

level, and references 'outwards' to establish Scotland in a global competitive environment. The second links the economic drivers of policy to the idea of a 'flourishing' Scotland and an emphasis on community, fairness and inclusiveness - referencing 'inwards' to established embedded and collective narratives, including those embedded in education. (p258)

The discourse of fairness and social justice is linked to economic competitiveness on the global stage and this is done repeatedly and throughout SNP policy. Arnott and Ozga (2010) argue that the pursuit of economic prosperity links wealth to fairness and 'economic growth is defined as a public good' (p338). And this is critical for how education is perceived, as a key driver towards both achieving social justice as well as economic prosperity. Mackie and Tett (2013) in an analysis of Scottish policy relating to young people write that within the discourse there exists a 'value struggle' between social democracy and neo-liberalism. On the one hand the Scottish Government foregrounds:

...the importance of equity, cohesion and solidarity, and the government has enacted several measures which aim to work towards these goals...on the other hand, at the heart of its strategy, work is posited as the primary method of tackling income inequality. Central to this is the message that the government is committed to providing the 'opportunity' for all to contribute to Scotland's economic growth...for all the talk of 'equity' and 'solidarity,' the Scottish Government's commitment to these ideals is bound up in a neoliberal framework where the reduction of inequality comes secondary to the requirements of economic competitiveness. (p399)

For the young people studied here, the economic focus of the Scottish Government's vision has resulted in a concerted focus on youth unemployment and the establishment of a 'youth employment strategy' towards which youth workers are expected to contribute (Montgomery and Baglioni, 2015: 12).

This is due to the increasing recognition of the value of youth work to 're-engage' young people, particularly disaffected young people, in contemporary social policy (Deuchar, 2009; Miler et al, 2015). As the most recent *National Youth Work Strategy* document states:

The overarching ambition is to enable Scotland's young people to move into sustainable employment. To do this, young people need to make the best transition from a broad general education into a senior phase which has a comprehensive range of opportunities which will improve their employment prospects. Youth Work plays a significant role, developing in young people skills recognised as important by employers, as well as providing support

and early intervention strategies to those at risk of disengaging from education. (Scottish Government, 2014a: 13)

This has seen youth workers in Scotland becoming more involved in practice targeted at improving young people's employability and towards more formally accredited learning opportunities (Moir and Crowther, 2014; McGregor, 2015; Unison, 2016; Fyfe et al, 2018).

As well as the youth work strategy, other high-profile policy initiatives have been established or continued under the SNP including the *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) (Scottish Government, 2013), *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) (Scottish Government, 2010) and *Opportunities for All* (Scottish Government, 2012b) all of which see a role for youth work in contributing to the 'national outcomes'<sup>2</sup> desired by the Scottish Government (McGregor, 2015). Partnership working is a central theme in these documents and there is an emphasis on practitioners working with young people operating alongside other education providers (particularly schools). These policy initiatives may be a 'double-edged sword' for youth work. On the one hand they envisage a more central role for youth work in the educative life of Scotland and as such, give the practice a much greater reach in terms of access to young people. On the other hand, this access may come at a price, as will be discussed in more depth in chapter 4, with the core features that define the practice potentially being lost (Davies, 2014). This tension is explored in this thesis as the contradictions between policy and practice are analysed for practitioners attempting to work in a way with young people that addresses issues of social justice in their lives.

#### **1.4 Thesis questions**

The focus of this study is to examine the lives of a group of young people who are engaging with various youth services in one community in Scotland. Specifically, the thesis will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of this group of young people in their journey from school to adult independence?
2. What social justice issues exist for these young people?

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<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government describes sixteen *national outcomes* that it aims to achieve in the period 2015-2025. These can be found at: <https://www2.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/outcome>

3. What is the impact of the relationship between policy and practice for practitioners working with young people?
4. How does participatory parity as a goal for social justice help us understand this context?
5. Do the experiences of young people move beyond Fraser's framework? How adequate is the framework of participatory parity for capturing injustice?

### **1.5 Format of the thesis**

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the trivalent framework of social justice as developed by Nancy Fraser. It is my contention that Fraser's framework is an excellent lens through which to examine what are complex and deeply interwoven sites of injustice in the lives of these young people. And it is also a useful tool to analyse the work that practitioners working with young people are undertaking, allowing us to question whether or not practitioners are truly able to intercede in issues of injustice impacting on the lives of those they work with.

In Chapter 3 I adopt Fraser's framework and utilise the three spheres of justice to examine the redistributive, recognitional and representational concerns that the literature suggests exists for youth in the contemporary context. As noted already, young people are said to have particularly suffered since the recent global economic downturn, and this for a variety of reasons. The literature points towards multiple concerns for young people growing up today and these cross all three of Fraser's domains and, more worryingly, the picture that emerges suggests that these may be operating in unison to cement the marginalisation of particular groups of young people.

In chapter 4 I examine the literature pertaining to the practitioners working with young people. I begin by exploring some of the key principles that underpin the practice of youth work. Importantly, addressing social injustice in the lives of the young people is highlighted as a key requirement of the practice. The chapter also examines current Scottish policy relating to the professional field and begins to draw out the potential issues facing practitioners in the contemporary context. This discussion confirms the potential contradictions highlighted between; (1) the features said to define youth work, and (2) the context shaped by current policy priorities in Scotland.

In Chapter 5 I outline the methodological basis of the thesis. I make the case for the critical constructivist theoretical perspective that informs the study. Using Fraser's framework alongside the narrative approach taken to the interviews with the young people, and the semi-structured interviews conducted with the practitioners, means that there is a consistent critical spine throughout the study. Utilising a narrative approach to the interview process with the young people allows a particularly rich insight into their lives, to their thoughts, experiences, perceptions and values (Squire et al, 2014, Kim, 2015). It is also an extremely powerful and effective way of presenting the stories that participants have told the researcher.

It is in chapter 6 that these stories are shared and examined. Here the lives of the twenty young people interviewed for this study are explored and analysed. In this chapter we can begin to see the usefulness of Fraser's framework for explicating the complex issues of injustice in their lives which are entwined and work to reinforce one another.

Chapter 7 focuses on the practitioners working with these young people. As stated already, Fraser's framework is employed here to examine the contradictions between policy imperatives and practice. The justice issues for the young people have been examined so it is useful to examine the context within which the practitioners are operating within and ask if it is conducive in allowing the practitioners to respond to the issues facing young people in the study.

The thesis concludes by critically assessing the usefulness of Nancy Fraser's framework of social justice for capturing, firstly, the justice issues of the young people and secondly, the context and issues for practitioners working with these young people.

## **1.6 Looking forward**

I will argue that by using Fraser's framework I have been able to illuminate the complex sites of injustice that are impacting on the lives of these young people as they try to make their way towards 'full adulthood.' It permits a window into the imbrication of these processes – maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation - and how they work in unison to cement one another, the economic works with the cultural, the cultural works with the political and the political works with the economic. In this way,



Fraser's framework has proven to be an extremely valuable tool for analysing the injustices the young people encounter.

But does Fraser miss anything? Her model is a means of analysing the institutions which shape our lives so perhaps we should not blame her for not bringing in *agency*. But as youth researchers, it is crucial that we keep in mind the ways in which young people 'talk back' to the structural influences that shape their life. With this in mind, I bring in a fourth 'R' – that of *resistance*, and to think about the ways in which these young people 'pushed back' in different ways on the injustices they encountered.

It is a useful framework to analyse how practitioners have been able to respond (or not) to the injustices these young people face in their day-to-day lives. The conclusion is that they are not. But perhaps the better way to phrase this is that they *cannot* due to pressures of funding, processes of performativity and an outcome-driven culture that tightly regulates their practice. Instead of 'starting where young people are at,' practitioners are instead tied into providing a very narrow, economically driven agenda based around attainment and employability. Fraser's framework has helped to shed further light on this.

As a final remark, in order to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in the study their names are coded, the agencies are anonymised and the location is not disclosed. Documentation and references relating to the specific locality are also anonymised throughout.

### **1.7 A note on the style adopted in the text**

I have made the decision to maintain, as far as possible, the language used by the young people and the practitioners when quoting from their interviews. I do this in order to try and retain as far as possible the authentic voice of the participants. The majority of them are Scottish so the quotations often contain dialect. I have used the Dictionary of the Scots Language<sup>3</sup> to ensure the correct spelling of terms throughout. I have removed hesitations, 'ums' and 'ers' that are normal parts of spoken language to maintain the fluidity of the text (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006). I have indicated in quotations (between asterisks) where participants have expressed sighs, laughter and other

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<sup>3</sup> This can be found at <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/>

responses in order to try and convey the emotion of the participant responses. I have also indicated where participants have paused for a few seconds. Pauses can indicate that a participant finds a subject challenging, or is struggling to remember an incident, or may be deciding what to say (Sutton and Austin, 2015). The point here is to try and aid the transparency of the interviews (Hiles and Čermák, 2007).



## Chapter 2 – A framework of social justice

### 2.1 Introduction

Since the mid-1990s Nancy Fraser has developed a trivalent ‘framework’ of social justice. In fact, it would perhaps be more accurate to say that it is a framework for interrogating social *injustice* (Bufacchi, 2012; Power, 2012). Rather than providing us with an exemplar for an ideal society, the great strength of Fraser’s work is that it is a critical theory that allows us to examine and critique dilemmas of injustice. As Fraser (2012a) notes:

...approaching justice negatively, through injustice, is powerful and productive...focusing on the wrong, we need to determine why it is so and how it could be made right. Only through such a process of negative thinking can we activate the concept of justice, redeem it from the realm of abstraction, concretize it, enrich it and make it fruitful for this world. (p50)

Fraser (2008) writes that her framework is driven by an emancipatory concern towards unmasking domination in modern society. Nancy Naples (Fraser and Naples, 2004) describes it thus:

I take her theoretical concerns and conceptual framing as directly linked to the emancipatory projects of Marxism and socialist feminism but situated within a more complex and intersectional analysis of claims-making strategies. The influence of the critical theoretical perspectives of the Frankfurt School, poststructuralism, feminism, and the radical politics of the 1960s inform her activist philosophy. (p1104)

Fraser (1996) is unapologetic in developing a framework with practical intent – conceptualising society in a way that allows us to reveal sites of inequality and oppression.

It is a truism to suggest that the theorisation of social justice is a highly contested and controversial subject, certainly in the sphere of academia. But perhaps this has been lost, at least a little, out there in the ‘real world’. As Young (2010) laments, ‘we passively regard the complex workings of our society as like natural forces whose effects are fortunate for some, unfortunate for others, but not a matter of justice for which we should take collective responsibility’ (p39). This is arguably truer for young people than their older contemporaries with the growth of individualisation, argued to be moving

young people today away from a sense of collective identity, and connected to a rise in discourse around individual responsibility and a loss in awareness and ability to connect their individual destiny to the structural forces that shape their lives (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Côté, 2006; France and Roberts, 2015; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2016). This is unfortunate as the 2008 global financial crisis and its effects are still being felt now (Pantazis, 2016). Driven by austerity in the UK these effects have contributed to wage freezes, un- and underemployment, a drop in the value of real incomes, a rise in precarity and a deterioration in the value of social security, all issues which are disproportionately borne by young people (Shildrick et al, 2012a; Roberts, 2013a; Shildrick, 2015). As Arnott and Ozga (2012) have warned for young people growing up here in Scotland, 'the early 2010s economic uncertainty – combined with austerity measures – have raised the spectre of a 'lost generation' of young Scots' (p165). With these effects having such potentially far-reaching and long-lasting consequences, it is vital that we have the intellectual tools to closely disentangle and examine these issues, asking if the consequences of these effects constitute social injustice.

It should be mentioned that the above effects fall into the category of socio-economic (or *redistributive*) justice. More recent theory however, has focused on the 'relational' aspect of social justice. Although not new and dating back (at least) to Tawney (1931) it has seen a resurgence in justice theory through the work of the likes of Charles Taylor (1992), Iris Marion Young (1990) and Nancy Fraser. Gewirtz (1998) perhaps captures the relational dimension of justice best:

It is about the *nature* and *ordering* of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level. Thus it refers to the practices and procedures which govern the organization of political systems, economic and social institutions, families and one-to-one social relationships. These things cannot unproblematically be conceptually reduced to matters of distribution. (p471 – *emphasis in original*)

Proponents of this way of thinking criticise the likes of Marx and Rawls for overlooking this aspect of social justice. Young (1990) for example, criticises Marx's thinking for being too 'narrow' and not clearly subjecting the *practices* that govern society to closer scrutiny:

Class domination is certainly enacted by agents deciding where to invest their capital – a distributive decision; but the social rules, rights, procedures,

and influences that structure capitalist decision-making are not distributed goods. In order to understand and evaluate the institutional framework within which distributive issues arise, the ideas of 'class' and 'mode of production' must be concretised in terms of specific social processes and relations. (p21)

Fraser, along with Young, argues that relational (or *recognitional*, as Fraser defines them) injustices can operate in their own right, albeit they are, in the main, almost always imbricated with economic injustices.

In more recent writing, Fraser (2008b) has added a third, *political* dimension of justice to the redistributive and relational domains. Fraser terms injustices in this sphere as *misrepresentation*. Writers such as Olson (2008) and Feldman (2008) critiqued Fraser's framework for neglecting what they theorised as a separate but interwoven dimension – indeed Olson goes further, suggesting that the political domain *precedes* the redistributive and relational spheres, as it is in the political domain that such injustices can be challenged. Fraser does not agree, instead positing that the political dimension operates alongside the redistributive and relational spheres, creating a complex web of injustice.

## 2.2 Participatory Parity

The key, normative principle which defines Fraser's critical framework is that of *participatory parity*. Participatory parity is the standard by which we ask if members of society are able to interact with one another, in social life, as peers. If they cannot, Fraser's framework (figure 1) offers a platform from which to analyse whether or not members may be suffering injustice. One of the key strengths of the framework is its dual function, as Fraser (2005b) outlines:

On the one hand, the principle of participatory parity is an outcome notion, which specifies a substantive principle of justice by which we may evaluate social arrangements: the latter are just if and only if they permit all the relevant social actors to participate as peers in social life. On the other hand, participatory parity is also a process notion, which specifies a procedural standard by which we may evaluate the democratic legitimacy of norms: the latter are legitimate if and only if they can command the assent of all concerned in fair and open processes of deliberation, in which all can participate as peers. (p88)

There are two key functions at work here. Firstly, Fraser's framework allows us, to some degree, to bridge the argument between 'equality of opportunity' versus 'equality

of outcome'. Although Fraser states that it is an outcome notion, in reality the framework evaluates whether individuals possess the necessary means to participate in social life on a par with their fellow citizens (or indeed non-citizens). As such, in terms of assessing claims of injustice, it falls, in the main, into the 'equality of opportunity' camp. As Olson (2008) notes:

...participation means being able to do all of the things that any other adult in one's society can do. One would have the same (or an equivalent set of) opportunities that anyone else has. This view strikes down many forms of discrimination that are simultaneously cultural and economic in character. One would be able to ride on the same bus seats, drink at the same fountains, patronise the same restaurants and hotels as anyone else. One would have an equal chance, *ceteris paribus*, at the same jobs, houses, neighbourhoods, and schools. In short, this way of reading participatory parity theorises it as a rich conception of equal opportunity. (p250)

To be clear – when we speak of equality of opportunity here it is not the narrow and shallow meritocratic ideal that is so weakly advanced by the political centre today (Dwyer, 2004; Barry, 2005). Rather, Fraser (1997a) makes the important point that:

...it is a necessary condition for participatory parity that systemic social inequalities be eliminated. This does not mean that everyone must have exactly the same income, but it does require the sort of rough equality that is inconsistent with systemically generated relations of dominance and subordination (p80).

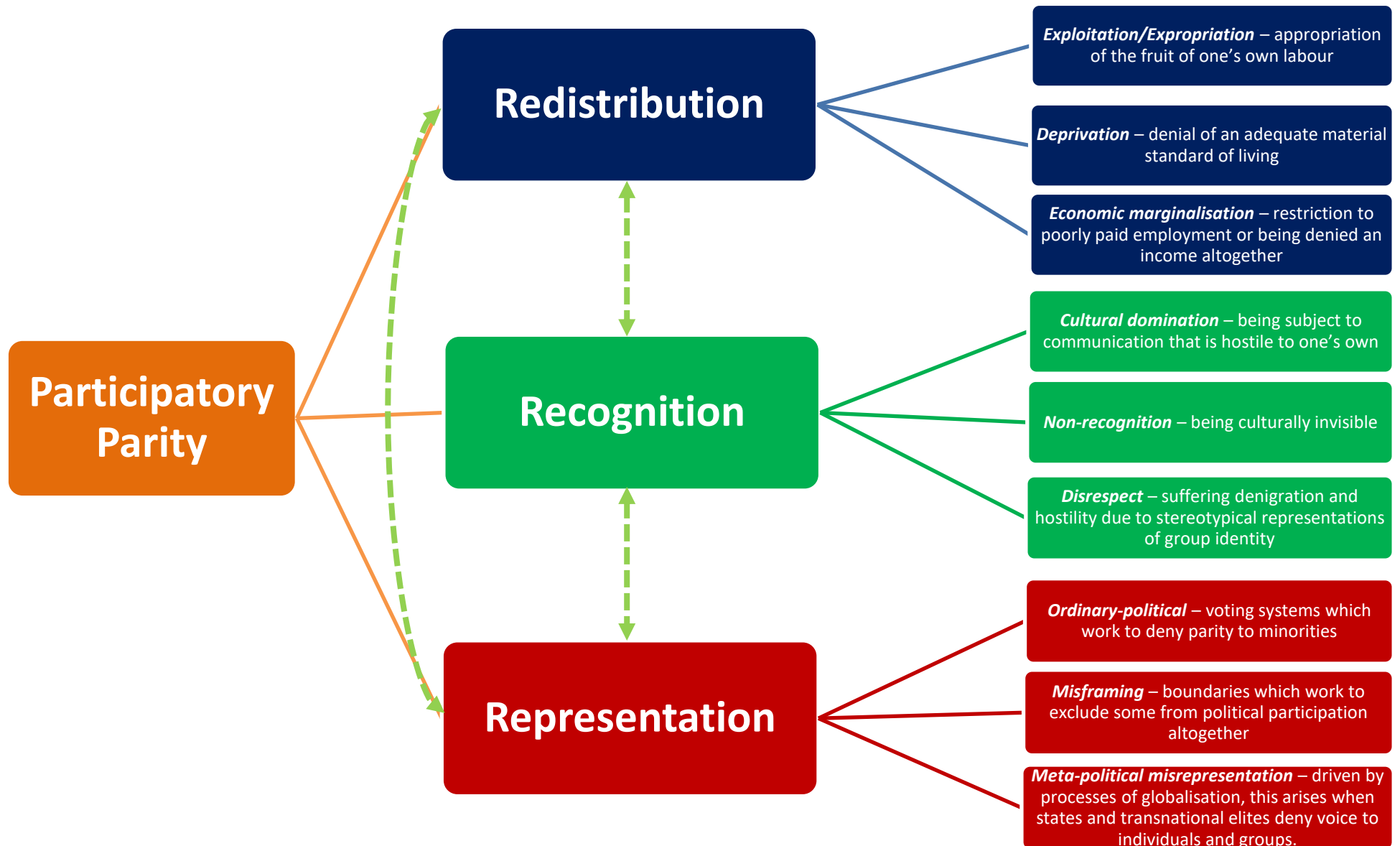
In short, participatory parity requires that we do pay attention to equality of outcome as large disparities of wealth or status can lead to power imbalances which mean genuine equality of opportunity is threatened (or non-existent) as social reproduction becomes increasingly entrenched. One need only look to the US and the UK today for an example of this as social mobility has stagnated (and perhaps even gone backwards) as inequalities have grown (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Standing, 2014; Social Mobility Commission, 2017).

This is connected to the second function, an important point and one that libertarian writers (for example) often overlook; that inequalities of wealth, status and power lead to inequalities in the democratic sphere. Anderson (2004) captures this well when discussing the broader conception of citizenship:

## Key Principle

## Spheres of Justice

## Justice sub-divisions



**Figure 1** - Fraser's framework of participatory parity



Citizenship involves functioning not only as a political agent - voting, engaging in political speech, petitioning government, and so forth - but participating as an equal in civil society. Civil society is the sphere of social life that is open to the general public...its institutions include public streets and parks, public accommodations such as restaurants, shops, theatres, buses and airlines, communications systems such as broadcasting, telephones, and the Internet, public libraries, hospitals, schools, and so forth...a group that is excluded from or segregated within the institutions of civil society...has been relegated to second-class citizenship, even if its members enjoy all of their political rights. (p173)

As will be discussed in more depth, it is crucial to consider the entwinement of the three spheres of Fraser's framework and work to unpick the ways in which they work with each other to reinforce one another (as illustrated in figure 1).

Finally, it is worth highlighting that participatory parity is an inherently *moral* category, presupposing that all human beings are of equal worth and entitled to participate in life as equal partners (Lara and Fine, 2007). Any practice which denies members of society the opportunity to do so may be unjust. Importantly, the standard of participatory parity allows us to take into account the different needs of various individuals and groups, validating only those claims which promote the equal opportunity to participate in public life. In this, it is similar to the 'capability model' of Sen (1985a; 1985b; 1992), recognising the different requirements of different individuals to convert 'functionings' into 'capabilities.' The important thing here is that the framework of participatory parity allows us to differentiate between warranted and unwarranted justice claims, a point that Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) develops in her exchange with Honneth:

Redistribution claimants must show that social arrangements unjustly deny them resources and opportunities that are necessary objective conditions for participatory parity. Recognition claimants, in contrast, must show that institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation unjustly deny them the equal respect and/or equal opportunity for achieving social esteem that are necessary intersubjective conditions for participatory parity. (p38)

Of course, and this is the first criticism of Fraser's model – such a claim presumes that actors have the power to contest what they perceive as injustice. Different individuals and different groups have different requirements to achieve participatory parity and differing means of having their voices heard. This leads on to a second point; 'injustice claims of whatever kind are to be validated only if the practices they target can be shown to diminish or obstruct the possibilities for equal participation in social life and

the discourses of the democratic public sphere' (Lovell, 2007: 69). This is precisely why Fraser extended her framework in later years to take into account the political sphere. For participatory parity to be achieved now there are three conditions that require to be met – fair redistribution, recognition and representation. Emujulu (2015) summarises this conception of social justice neatly when she writes that it is 'about examining the nature of citizens' material resources, the quality of citizens' social relations and considering how these resources and relations might facilitate and/or undermine the practice of democracy' (p3). Whether people are suffering from maldistribution, misrecognition or misrepresentation (or a mix of the three spheres), they can make a justice claim by appealing to the single, normative standard of participatory parity – asking the question, 'am I able to participate on a par with my fellow citizens?' It is useful to take each sphere in turn in order to understand how each feeds into the standard of participatory parity.

### **2.3 Redistribution**

The sphere of redistributive justice relates to the economic domain, associated with the distribution of wealth, education and health amongst other material benefits. Injustice here is defined as socio-economic and rooted in the material structure of society. It is primarily this area that has dominated and exercised philosophers of social justice theory in the past, with the likes of Locke, Hume and Rawls (amongst innumerable others) theorising on what basis the distribution of the benefits and burdens of societies should be shared (or not) between members (Miller, 1999; Clayton and Williams, 2004). For a number of philosophers (primarily from the libertarian right) there exists the question of such a thing as social justice existing at all. For those with this position, the only just outcome in society is that dictated by the properly functioning free market (Hayek, 1944; Friedman, 1962; Nozick, 1974). Their position rests on an ideal of negative liberty in that the legitimate state has little function other than to protect individuals from interference by others. Nussbaum (2003) argues that it is this tradition that is increasingly holding sway today through the spread of neoliberalism with that most malicious of myths, the meritocratic ideal, underpinning it (Barry, 2005; Littler, 2013; Calder, 2016).

However, critics of this position, arguing primarily from an egalitarian perspective, have pointed out that the ability to translate opportunity into something more substantive is ultimately dependent on access to resources (whether economic, social, cultural, political, educational etc.). This is particularly the case if we are adopting a position of equality of opportunity. If we are, then it must surely be the case (as Fraser argues) that people are able to do so on an equal footing – if they cannot, then how can the outcome of such arrangements be just? Negative liberty appears to hold little value if citizens are unable to exercise their rights (Bauhn, 1997; Sample, 1998; Dwyer, 2004). As Fraser (2003) so presciently notes regarding the underpinning ideology of Western capitalist societies:

...the most basic principle of legitimacy in this social order is liberal equality, as expressed both in market ideals, such as equal exchange, the career open to talents and meritocratic competition, and in democratic ideals, such as equal citizenship and status equality...[but] it is not the case that everyone enters these struggles on equal terms. On the contrary, some contestants lack the resources to participate on a par with others, thanks to unjust economic arrangements. (p56-57)

Fraser (2015) goes on to argue that the entrenched hegemonic view today is one that the only just distribution is one whose outcome is a result of free market transactions.

However, Fraser (2008c), arguing from a conception of ‘positive liberty,’ states that to participate meaningfully in society individuals require a certain basic standing in order to do so. Without a minimum standard of these needs being met in modern capitalist society, the result is often one of poverty and/or social exclusion. As Anderson (2004b) observes:

This definition of freedom neglects the importance of having the means to do what one wants. In addition, the definition implicitly assumes that, given the material means and internal capacity to do what one wants, the absence of interference from others is all one needs to do what one wants. This ignores the fact that most of the things people want to do require participation in social activities, and hence communication and interaction with others. One cannot do these things if others make one an outcast...societies that permit the creation of outcasts and subordinate classes can be as repressive as any despotic regime. (p172)

The consequences of inequality and poverty in today’s Western societies ensure that meritocracy remains a myth, as it ever has, undermining the appeal to negative liberty (Miller, 1999; Barry, 2005; Lister, 2007; Littler, 2017).

Feeding into and informing the principle of redistributive injustice, Fraser identifies three categories (or sub-divisions) of socio-economic injustice:

1. **Exploitation/Expropriation**<sup>4</sup> – appropriation of the fruit of one's own labour
2. **Economic marginalisation** – restriction to poorly paid employment or being denied an income altogether
3. **Deprivation** – denial of an adequate material standard of living

Although these sub-divisions operate in different ways, they each work to deny individuals the necessary resources to participate on a par in society with their peers.

In an interview with Hanne Dahl and colleagues, Fraser (Fraser et al, 2004) states that 'whereas Fordist-era movements had couched their claims in the language of distributive justice, post-Fordist movements have been more disposed to make claims for the *recognition* of identity and difference' (p379). Fraser argues convincingly that this has resulted from a focus on issues such as multiculturalism, multi-nationalism and the growth of so-called 'identity politics'<sup>5</sup>. It is argued that from around the late 1960s until the 2008 economic crash, mobilisations around banners such as sexuality, gender, race and nationality were the key battlegrounds in fights over social justice in 'post-socialist' political life (Fraser, 1995b; Harvey, 1996; Rockhill and Gomez-Muller, 2011). As Fraser (2000) argues, this switch in focus has been unhelpful during a time of rapid economic globalisation, 'when an aggressively expanding capitalism is radically

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<sup>4</sup> Fraser (2016a) updated her framework, developing and expanding on Marx's central point that capitalism is a social system of class domination which enables the exploitation of the working class. In her reply to Michael Dawson, Fraser develops the argument (as stated previously) that Marx fails to take into account key *relational* and *political* dynamics inherent in capitalism. Fraser (in reference to race) writes, 'the Marxian perspective focuses attention on capital's exploitation of wage labor in commodity production; in its usual guise, therefore, it marginalizes some equally fundamental processes that are bound up with that one. Two such processes are essential for theorizing the racial dynamics of capitalist society. The first is the crucial role played in capital accumulation by unfree, dependent, and unwaged labor—*by which I mean labor that is expropriated, as opposed to exploited*, subject to domination unmediated by a wage contract. The second concerns the role of political orders in conferring the status of free individuals and citizens on "workers," while constituting others as lesser beings - for example, as chattel slaves, indentured servants, colonized subjects, "native" members of "domestic dependent nations," debt peons, felons, and "covered" beings, such as wives and children, who lack an independent legal personality' (p165 – *my emphasis*). This differentiation is important when discussing the labour market experiences of the young people in this study, later in the thesis.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the term 'identity politics' is, largely, used in a pejorative sense. As Fraser (1997) notes 'the expression 'identity politics' is increasingly used as a derogatory synonym for feminism, anti-racism, and anti-heterosexism. The implication is that the inherent thrust of such politics is a particularistic self-assertion that rejects the universalism of 'common dreams' (p5).

exacerbating economic inequality' (p108). As such, she argues, distributive injustice has not disappeared. On the contrary, economic inequalities are developing as neo-liberal forces continue to hold sway over much of the Western world. Arguably however, since the global economic crash of 2008, issues of redistribution have reappeared, as Fraser (2014a) notes, 'the crisis of 2008 threw into bold relief the global supremacy of finance capital, its power to wreck economies, dislocate societies, dictate policy, and even bring elected governments to their knees' (p130). The ripple effects of the crisis are still being felt today as poverty and inequality continues to deepen in the UK and elsewhere in the world.

## 2.4 Recognition

The second sphere feeding into participatory parity is what Fraser (2005a) terms recognition. This concerns the *relational* aspect of justice - a just society requires that the institutions and arrangements of society allow members of different groups to interact with one another equally as peers. Charles Taylor (1992) describes it:

Nonrecognition or misrecognition...can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, reduced mode of being. Beyond simple lack of respect, it can inflict a grievous wound, saddling people with crippling self-hatred. Due recognition is not just a courtesy but a vital human need. (p25)

Gender, sexuality, race and nationality amongst others have become the focal points of social justice struggles in contemporary 'post-socialist' society and their claims to justice, writers such as Fraser argue, move beyond the economic domain.

Misrecognition occurs when dominant social groups inhibit the ability of subaltern groups to participate meaningfully in society on their own terms. Fraser (1997a) argues this can leave groups 'invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interactions' (p14). Blatterer (2010) for example, draws attention to the misrecognition young people suffer in terms of the youth to adult transition:

On the one hand they are required to lead unsettled lives, and...are apt to receive recognition precisely for their willingness to be mobile and to embrace 'risk'...on the other hand, satisfying the requirements for flexibility elicits forms of discursive misrecognition, charging young adults with a refusal to grow up. (p68)

In other words, young people are damned if they do, damned if they don't. Fraser (2003) argues, along with justice theorists such as Young (1990; 2008), that the 'difference-blind' theorists who focused purely on economic egalitarianism failed to articulate experiences of injustice experienced by, for example, minority ethnic groups and women.

As with the redistributive sphere, Fraser (1995b) identifies three categories of 'cultural or symbolic' injustice which are 'rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication' (p71):

1. **Cultural domination** – being subject to patterns of communication which are alien or hostile to one's own
2. **Non-recognition** – being culturally invisible
3. **Disrespect** – being subject to disparagement or hostility due to stereotypical representations

The justice sub-divisions here: cultural domination, non- recognition and disrespect, require a different sort of response to that of the redistributive domain. Again, although these sub-divisions operate in different ways, the outcome of each results in individuals being assigned an inferior social standing relative to their peers in the majority or dominant group.

Writers such as Gitlin (1995), Harvey (1996) and Rorty (2000) have criticised the focus on recognitional politics, arguing that this focus on difference undermines class solidarity and makes it more difficult to build alliances in order to resist neo-liberal advancement. Rorty (2000), for example, writes that 'the attempt to put "cultural recognition" on a par with redistribution seems to me the result of...overestimation: the academics are desperately eager to assure themselves that what they are doing is central, rather than marginal, to leftist politics' (p75). However, writers such as Fraser, Honneth (1992; 2001), Young (1990; 2000) and Taylor (1985) amongst others argue that by purely focusing on issues of redistributive justice, we miss the vital relational politics which can both undergird issues of redistribution and also stand alone as injustices on their own. As Young (2008) describes:

...some institutional rules and practices, the operation of hegemonic norms, the shape of economic or political incentives, the physical effects of past

actions and policies, and people acting on stereotypical assumptions, all conspire to produce systematic and reinforcing inequalities between groups. People differently positioned in structural processes often have unequal opportunities for self-development and access to resources, to make decisions about both the conditions of their own action and that of others, or to be treated with respect or deference. (p80)

Even if redistributive justice was achieved, the relational dynamics of injustice would still be in operation. Policies and practices enabling the continuation of sexism, racism, ableism and homophobia, for example, would ensure that injustice would continue. To paraphrase Fraser (1996), for justice to be achieved: no redistribution without recognition.

## **2.5 Combining Redistribution and Recognition**

Importantly, Fraser's (2000) politics of recognition centres on her 'status model' where misrecognition is considered a matter of *social status*. Injustice occurs when individuals are denied equal respect and status due to institutionalised arrangements or in the everyday norms of society that underpin interaction:

When such patterns of disrespect and disesteem are institutionalized, for example, in law, social welfare, medicine, public education, and/or the social practices and group mores that structure everyday interaction, they impede parity of participation, just as surely as do distributive inequities. (Fraser, 1998: 25-6)

In this regard Fraser's conception of recognition differs from theorists such as Honneth (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) and Taylor (1992) who view recognition as a matter of self-realisation and the ability of individuals to develop and maintain a positive sense of self or 'intact identity'. Honneth (1992; 2001; 2011) in particular takes the opposite view to the likes of Rorty and Gitlin, arguing that maldistributive effects are the institutional effects of social disrespect. As such, a comprehensive framework of social justice (including issues of redistribution and representation) can be built on the basis of intersubjective recognition alone.

Fraser (2011) doesn't agree with Honneth, in two important areas. Firstly, she suggests that to follow Honneth's logic and to locate misrecognition as damaged identity would be to risk 'adding insult to injury' to those in poverty. Fraser argues that those suffering the concomitant effects of humiliation or disrespect would be held responsible for their own suffering. Fraser, with the likes of Wilkinson (2005), makes the point that 'those

privileged to view these problems [of misrecognition] from above can all too easily blame them on the victim, so that the fault lies with their self-esteem rather than with the humiliation they suffer' (p156). This seems a somewhat unsatisfactory basis, however, on which to dismiss Honneth's thinking. As Lister (2008) argues, 'to acknowledge the psychological pain that these people are expressing as a result of misrecognition is not 'to add insult to injury' ...a lack of participatory parity and the psychological impact of poverty are intertwined' (p113). Following Lister, we can focus our attention on the institutional subordination that denies misrecognised groups parity whilst appreciating the psychological harm that status misrecognition can do.

The second important area of distinction with Honneth is his reductive cultural view of distribution. This appears unsatisfactory if we consider:

...the problems of deindustrialisation under conditions of globalisation, or of the transfer from one nation state to another of quality wage labour jobs, or of the instabilities caused by rapid and unpredictable global capital flows...these...injustices arise from a different kind of social ordering than that captured in theories of recognition. (Zurn, 2008: 145-6)

As Fraser (2003) notes, not all distributive injustice is a by-product of cultural injustice. And there is a danger that by analysing these issues through a singular lens of recognition we may miss problems in other areas.

Rather than occupying entirely separate spheres, Fraser (*Ibid*) argues that issues of distribution and recognition (and representation) interpenetrate. Though they do not fold neatly into one another, they interact causally. Thus, contra Honneth, Rorty et al, neither can be reduced to the other. Fraser goes on to make the point, however, that combining the two positions appears untenable. The politics of redistribution seeks to abolish economic arrangements which underpin group specificity whereas the politics of recognition (seemingly) seeks to affirm the value of specific groups. Fraser's (2005a) status model, however, means rather than seeking to affirm specific group identity, the focus is instead aimed at the institutional practices preventing individuals and groups from participating fully in social life:

The status model requires examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative standing of social actors. If and when such patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on a par with one another in social life, then we can speak of reciprocal recognition



and status equality. When, in contrast, institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute some actors as inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible, hence as less than full partners in social interaction, then we can speak of misrecognition and status subordination. On the status model, therefore, misrecognition is not a psychical deformation but an institutionalized relation of social subordination. (p446-7)

Rather than being an ethical wrong (as in the case of Honneth), seen in this way misrecognition is rather a matter of social justice. As such, Fraser (1997a) argues that critical theorists should not adhere to the claim that they must make an either/or choice (redistribution or recognition), 'we should aim to identify the emancipatory dimensions of both problematics and integrate them into a single, comprehensive framework' (p4).

This is an important distinction between Fraser and the likes of Honneth and Taylor when considering misrecognition. Fraser follows Rawls and Marx and seeks to side-step the problems associated with identity politics by turning our attention onto the state and societal institutions which govern our lives. As others have identified, it is the state that is the central player and site of power in society (Brown, 1995; Feldman, 2002).

Fraser (2012a) writes:

...instead of concentrating on otherness, we should follow Rawls (and Marx!) and look to 'the basic structure'. To see who deserves moral consideration, we should determine who is jointly subjected to a common set of ground rules which define the terms of social cooperation. If the ground rules institute one group's exploitative dependence on another group - for such vital necessities as body parts, labour power, babies, sex, domestic work, child-care, elder-care, cleaning, waste disposal - then together they are subject to the same basic structure. Members of both inhabit the same moral universe and deserve equal consideration in matters of justice. (p50)

As such, it is important to acknowledge that misrecognition can be codified both formally and informally – formally in the sense that it can be institutionalised via law as well as government and administrative policies; informally in the customs and social practices of civil society (Fraser, 2000; 2011).

The welfare state is one such important site. As Emejulu (2013) notes, it can be an unwieldy, unresponsive and bureaucratic institution but importantly it can also act as a protector and guarantor of rights – particularly to those with little in the way of formal power. It can redistribute power, resources and regulate spaces for people to interact:

The state can undermine or suppress deliberative dialogue about the common good through “invited spaces” that direct and control both the process and the outcomes of citizen debate. The state, however, can also support the democratic participation of the most marginalised through a system of social welfare. Regardless of how the state in advanced capitalist countries is seen or experienced, it is important to bear in mind that it is not a monolith of either control or protection. (p159)

In this regard, we can appreciate the crucial role that the state plays in holding and distributing resources across the three spheres of redistribution, recognition and representation. At the same time, it is important to pay attention to the agency that individuals and groups exercise in their interactions with the state as well as in civil society. When analysing the justice experiences of young people we must appreciate that they are not ‘social dupes’, passive as the winds of social forces blow around them. As structures act upon them, so they act back.

## 2.6 Representation

The final sphere of justice was added later by Fraser (2008a; 2008b; 2011; 2014a; 2014b), the political dimension of representation and participation. Fraser (2008b) places this dimension alongside that of redistribution and recognition (figure 1), stating that it ‘sets the procedures for staging and resolving contests in both the economic and the cultural dimensions’ (p17). Again, Fraser identifies three sub-divisions that can contribute to the injustice of misrepresentation:

1. **Ordinary-political** – Do voting systems work to exclude minority groups? Do difference-blind rules in conjunction with maldistribution and misrecognition work to exclude groups from political participation?
2. **Misframing** – When community boundaries are drawn in such a way as to exclude some members from participating in decision-making processes which impact on their lives.
3. **Meta-political misrepresentation** – This occurs when states and trans-national elites ‘monopolise the activity of frame-setting, denying voice to those who may be harmed in the process, and blocking creation of democratic arenas where the latter’s claims can be vetted and redressed. The effect is to exclude the overwhelming majority of people from participation in the meta-discourses that determine the authoritative division of political space’ (Fraser, 2008a: 26).

Each operates in a different way but the outcome is the same – the stifling or exclusion of legitimate political voice. Fraser (2014a) builds on the work of Jürgen Habermas and his public-sphere theory – probing the normative legitimacy and efficacy of public opinion and querying whether or not people are able to participate in political decisions that affect their lives. For Fraser’s model, parity in this sense can only be achieved (and any political decision is only legitimate) when individuals can participate on an equal footing in decision-making processes, particularly when considering issues that directly affect them. Fraser terms this the ‘all-subjected principle’<sup>6</sup>. Fraser (2014b) argues that ‘all interlocutors must, in principle, enjoy roughly equal chances to state their views, place issues on the agenda, question the tacit and explicit assumptions of others, switch levels as needed, and generally receive a fair hearing’ (p28). Fraser (2005b) makes the point that there are multiple layers of political exclusion at work today – first-past-the-post voting systems which can work to exclude and discourage minority groups from the political process, the exclusion of individuals from the political process altogether and trans-national and elite organisations (such as the IMF and OECD) which can operate beyond Westphalian governance structures, overriding democracy with seeming impunity. Fraser (2008b) states there is a:

...growing gap between the two tracks of politics – one informal and located in civil society, the other formal and institutionalised in the state. According to the Westphalian political imagery, these two tracks are supposed to be aligned: national civil society is supposed to map neatly onto the national state, which is in turn supposed to be held accountable to the national public sphere. In reality, however, they don’t line up. (p154)

And we can appreciate that this is particularly the case for the most marginalised and impoverished groups within society.

This is crucial in understanding why a focus on redistribution alone is far from satisfactory. A focus on redistribution tends to construct power as patterns rather than a dynamic and ongoing process – ‘the logic of distribution...makes power a machine or instrument, held in ready and turned on at will, independently of social processes’ (Young, 1990: 32). Justice in this sense has to move beyond distribution to the procedural issues of participation, looking at who makes the rules, who has a say in

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<sup>6</sup> Fraser had earlier promoted what she called the ‘all-affected principle’ towards determining the proper scope of democratic justice. However, she later abandoned this position for what she terms the ‘all-subjected principle’. See Fraser (2008a) chapter 4 and Fraser (2016b) for a full discussion of this subtle but important change.

evaluating institutional norms and who has a voice to challenge potential injustices in the redistributive and recognitional spheres. For a condition to be considered just then it must be the case that all subjected to its outcome have had their say. As Young (2008) observes, paying heed to power in this way means paying attention to the:

...operation of hegemonic norms, the shape of economic or political incentives, the physical effects of past actions and policies, and people acting on stereotypical assumptions, all conspire to produce systematic and reinforcing inequalities between groups. People differently positioned in structural processes often have unequal opportunities for self-development and access to resources, to make decisions about both the conditions of their own action and that of others, or to be treated with respect or deference. (80)

What is crucial to understand here and something Fraser perhaps does not explicate fully is the issue of *power*, particularly in the overlap between recognition and representation (Rosa, 2017). For sure, redistributive relations play an important part in determining the opportunities and life chances afforded people. But equally importantly (and perhaps more importantly, as argued by many theorists) is the role of informal power which can exist and create relationships of marginalisation and exploitation which can cut people off before they have even reached the economic pass. As Foucault (1980) notes:

Power must be analysed as something that circulates, or rather something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising their power. (p98)

This is important for our analysis of justice. If Foucault is correct, then it is imperative that we look beyond distribution to the relationships which determine and sustain the institutional biases which govern opportunities (if opportunities are what we wish to extend). These permeate through our society to justify structures of domination. Lukes (2011) builds on this with his 'third dimension' of power, drawing on Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony, whereby power can shape or suppress the desires and beliefs of individuals, though they may not even be aware this is occurring. This has been contested by those who frame this as a form of 'false consciousness' - arrogant, superior and that works to position individuals as 'political dupes' (Hay, 1997).

However, as will be discussed in this thesis, this is important for us to consider when we turn our attention to young people, as Furlong and Cartmel (2007) suggest that in late modernity they can experience an ‘epistemological fallacy’:

Blind to the existence of powerful chains of interdependency, young people frequently attempt to resolve collective problems through individual action and hold themselves responsible for their inevitable failure. (p114)

They argue that current political and social discourse which accentuates the virtues of individualism; choice, self-reliance, personal responsibility, opportunity and attention to competition, has led to an erosion in awareness of the structural forces which still play an integral role in shaping their lives. As a result, young people can subsequently blame themselves for any ‘failure’ to progress in life. The usefulness of this concept has been contested (Cotê, 2014; France and Haddon, 2014; Cotê, 2016) though even its critics suggest that young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, may act in ways that work against their own interests (France and Threadgold, 2016). As Furlong (2009) notes, ‘forms of consciousness may have changed, but people’s locations within power structures still strongly impact on life chances’ (p344).

As such it is imperative that attention is paid to group difference in order to compensate for systemic and institutional disadvantage which can serve to disempower individuals – particularly those who will most suffer the consequences of any action. For Anderson (2004) this means paying attention to the inequalities which beset individuals on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, class, disability and age, amongst others. Thus, what is required is a relational theory of justice that moves beyond distribution to analyse the relationships which determine the processes within which the benefits of society are allocated whilst paying attention to the ability of individuals and groups to have a say in their destiny. We can begin to see the way in which the three spheres of justice can overlap to cement marginalisation and inequality.

## **2.7 Transformative Vs affirmative remedies**

An important aspect of Fraser’s critical theory is the distinction she makes between the remedies for the various injustices that we can identify. Fraser (1997a) differentiates between ‘affirmative’ and ‘transformative’ remedies for injustice. Affirmative remedies are those which attempt to correct unbalanced outcomes of social arrangements which

fail to alter the deeper structure of society. It is these which currently dominate social policy – particularly in Western capitalist states:

We are stuck in the vicious circles of mutually reinforcing cultural and economic subordination. Our best efforts to redress these injustices by means of the combination of the liberal welfare state plus mainstream multiculturalism are generating perverse effects. Only by looking to alternative conceptions of redistribution and recognition can we meet the requirements of justice for all. (p33)

An example of an affirmative redistributive measure is welfare benefits which give 'surface' re-allocation of goods (and must do so continuously) without addressing the primary cause of why they are required in the first place. This also, in the current context, exacerbates misrecognition as it renders recipients open to stigmatising labels. One only need to consider the rise (and impact) of 'poverty porn,' so prevalent across UK television screens today, to see the pernicious effects of this phenomenon (Jensen, 2014; Beresford, 2016). As Fraser (1995b) notes, 'public-assistance programmes 'target' the poor, not only for aid but for hostility. Such remedies, to be sure, provide needed material aid. But they also create strongly cathected, antagonistic group differentiations' (83-4). We can witness this in action in the UK, particularly in the rhetoric of 'scroungers Vs skivers' – a favourite trope of the Conservative party (Daguerre and Etherington, 2014; Patrick, 2016). Blackman and Rogers (2018) argue:

...both tabloid newspapers and TV reality programmes construct young adults who claim benefits as 'scum', a burden on society and totally untrustworthy... young people lose their agency, because both media and government have identified that society cannot trust them – and also assert that young people cannot even be trusted by themselves. This circular policy agenda means that young people are continually being defined as deficient. (p95)

In terms of the recognitional sphere, Fraser (2003) criticises 'mainstream multiculturalism'. This aims to redress inequalities but 'tend, rather, to encourage separation and group enclaves, chauvinism and intolerance, patriarchalism and authoritarianism' (p91-2). Multiculturalism, Fraser argues, leaves intact identities and the group differentiations which underlie them. A 'transformative' approach, on the other hand, is what Fraser terms *deconstruction*. She argues that the aim here is to identify and destabilise our understandings of black/white, gay/straight and so forth. Fraser aims to dereify such distinctions and reduce their power to exclude, challenging

and dismantling the social and cultural patterns that determine what it is to be 'normal'. How this would appear in practice, however, is unclear and has been questioned by a variety of critics (Phillips, 1997; Kompridis, 2008; Young, 2008). A transformative distributional approach, Fraser (2003) claims:

...seeks to redress end-state injustices precisely by altering the underlying framework that generates them. By restructuring the relations of production, transformative redistribution would change the social division of labour, reducing social inequality without creating stigmatized classes of vulnerable people perceived as beneficiaries of special largesse. (p46-7)

These remedies, traditionally associated with socialism, sound almost utopian in their objectives, particularly in today's globalised economy. Fraser (2008a) writes that the affirmative remedy in the political sphere is one that seeks to resolve issues through the now outmoded state-territorial imagery. Fraser argues that due to the transnationalisation of power structures and the increasing irrelevance of the Westphalian public sphere, multinational and global elites increasingly make decisions which affect all of our lives, yet we have very little input into these processes. As such, the transformative remedy for the political sphere is the aforementioned 'all-subjected principle' – which seeks to reframe the 'who' of justice. Fraser (2014a) suggests that:

The notion that everyone who is subjected to a given governance structure should have political standing in relation to it points to an expanded understanding of public sphere theory's central ideal of public autonomy. In this view, entitlement to participate in collective opinion and will formation is not restricted to citizenship in bounded territorial states, although it includes that, to be sure. Such participation is also required in relation to non-state structures of governance, at both smaller and larger scales. (p149)

All these transformative solutions appear, in the current context, quite unconvincing and some considerable distance away from fruition. Nonetheless, Fraser (1996) argues that they can allow us to conceive transformational reforms which can, in the long term, lead to transformative ends. However, for the task of analysing injustice in the context of the young people's lives this is not a deal breaker. Fraser's criticism of the affirmative measures and the perverse effects these have seems prescient. Thus, for the purpose of analysing injustice the framework remains intact - and an extremely useful tool.

## 2.8 Conclusion - A conceptual framework

The strength of Fraser's critical theory is its use as a conceptual tool which is multi-dimensional, although normatively monist. The capacious principle of *participatory parity* allows us to train a critical eye on contemporary society and question the legitimacy of the institutional framework and social norms which govern everyday life. As Fraser (Fraser et al, 2004) herself notes, the result is a trivalent framework which mirrors the three dimensions of stratification as developed by Weber (Weber, 1948). It is an ideal critical tool for examining and critiquing the social structures which can impinge on an individual's ability to participate on a par in society.

<b>Domains of Justice</b>	<b>Conditions for participatory parity</b>	<b>Forms of social stratification</b>	<b>Forms of injustice</b>	<b>Remedies</b>
Economic	Objective condition	Class	Maldistribution	Redistribution
Cultural	Intersubjective condition	Status	Misrecognition	Recognition
Political	Public-political condition	Citizenship	Marginalisation	Inclusion

**Table 1** – The domains of justice (Olson, 2008: 255)

The political dimension is crucial in this regard, as Olson (2008) notes:

When a particular group lacks political agency, it lacks the very means required to make claims in the political system. When a group is less effective making political claims, it cannot fight the economic, cultural and political circumstances that create its marginality in the first place. Marginalisation breeds marginalisation, creating a downward spiral of unequal participation. (Olson: 2008: 253)

It would appear impossible to contest injustices in the redistributive and recognitional spheres without political voice. At the same time, without the necessary resources in the economic and cultural spheres it appears challenging to mobilise effectively in the political sphere, lacking the necessary power to be heard (Fraser 2008b). As a consequence, it becomes apparent that analysing and overcoming injustice requires a three-pronged approach.

This is worth highlighting and is an important point that Fraser raises throughout her writing. Far from the three spheres operating independently, justice issues within the



three domains are very much imbricated and work to reinforce each other (as illustrated in figure 1). Iris Young (1990; 1997) and Judith Butler (1998), for example, dispute Fraser's separation of the spheres. They argue that these justice issues are so deeply entwined today that to try and separate them is an exercise in futility. Young (1997) suggests that:

...the cure is to reconnect issues of symbols and discourse to their consequences in the material organization of labour, access to resources, and decision-making power, rather than to solidify a dichotomy between them...a better theoretical approach is to pluralize concepts of injustice and oppression so that culture becomes one of several sites of struggle interacting with others. (p3)

Fraser (2003) challenges this argument by asserting that to 'stipulate that all injustices, and all claims to remedy them are simultaneously economic and cultural is to paint a night in which all cows are grey: obscuring actually existing divergences of status from class' (p61). Far from creating a false dichotomy, Fraser argues the framework of participatory parity adopts a *critical perspective*, probing beneath the surface of injustices and attempting to reveal the economic injustices of apparently cultural (or political) processes and vice versa. We can, for heuristic purposes, keep the domains theoretically distinct whilst using the framework to analyse (as in the case of the welfare recipients discussed above) areas of imbrication. Fraser (2005b) herself acknowledges that economic, cultural and political injustices are interwoven but the most profitable means of teasing apart and interrogating these is to keep them distinct. It is in the stage of analysis that we can begin to theorise where areas of injustice interpenetrate. As will be shown in the next chapter the framework offered by Fraser appears a potent tool, as an analysis of the literature reveals young people face issues of injustice across all three domains. As such, it is an ideal lens through which to interrogate the experiences of the young people in this study.

## Chapter 3 - Young people in a changing world

### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I move from the theoretical to the actual – bringing out the key social justice issues affecting young people today from the literature. In order to do this I follow the lead of Fraser (2003) and keep the three domains of redistribution, recognition and representation theoretically distinct in order to tease out the key issues impacting on young people in each sphere. However, as the chapter progresses I begin making the links between the domains in order to illustrate how they interpenetrate. I will particularly focus on the literature referring to young people in the Scottish and UK context as this best relates to the young people who will feature in this study's sample. The three domains are brought together in the conclusion to understand the relationship between them and to make explicit how they are interpenetrating.

Fraser (2015; 2016b) makes the argument that the latest incarnation of capitalism, what she terms 'financialised capitalism,' is not only impacting on the economic realm, but is also deeply affecting both the social order as well as the political domain:

...interpreting the present ills of democracy as more or less acute expressions of what I shall call the *political contradictions of financialized capitalism*...what this development signals is not simply a political crisis but something broader, a general crisis of this social order...present processes of de-democratization indicate something rotten not only in capitalism's current, financialized form but in capitalist society per se. (Fraser, 2015: 159 – *emphasis in original*)

Importantly, these consequences move beyond the purely economic domain and impact both upon issues of recognition and representation. Writers and academics in the area of youth sociology also point to the gradual neo-liberalisation of Western societies and how this has altered the landscape that today's young people have to navigate in order to reach the traditional markers of adulthood in comparison to previous generations (du Bois Reymond, 2009; Giroux, 2013; France and Roberts, 2015; France and Threadgold, 2016).

Many authors, utilising a 'generational perspective' have drawn attention to the evidence which suggests that 'Millennials' will be the first generation in modern history whose living standards will be lower than that of their predecessors (Leach and Hanton,

2015; Gardiner, 2016). As Bessant et al (2017) note, people under the age of 35 in the UK 'face an increasing burden of deprivation, inequality and disadvantage relative to older people' (p12). Research suggests that the UK has one of the highest rates of youth poverty in the developed world, in excess of 20% (Stephens and Blenkinsopp, 2015). Evidence has also pointed to an entrenchment of age-banded inequality (Corlett and Clarke, 2017). The 2008-2013 recession hit 16-24 year-olds particularly hard and they are the only group whose incomes have still not returned to pre-crisis levels – with the blame laid firmly at the door of public policy favouring older generations (MacInnes et al, 2015; Gardiner, 2016). Ellison (2017) states that 'young adults are now one of the most vulnerable groups across European societies and beyond particularly in terms of poverty and social exclusion and the labour market' (p677). Others argue, however, that the generational conflict is being intentionally stoked by proponents of neo-liberalism in order to weaken state protections for all (Tiraboschi, 2012; Sukarieh and Tannock, 2015b). Even if this is the case, there appears to be issues that particularly impact on young people and these warrant critical scrutiny.

Importantly however, it should be pointed out that the effects of neo-liberalism are not felt evenly across the contemporary youth cohort. These effects are argued to have been exacerbated by the 2008 - 2013 global economic recession and the subsequent turn to austerity in the UK. As Simmons and Thompson (2011) point out:

Certain individuals and groups are systematically advantaged whilst others are disempowered by the prevailing political climate. For young people, the consequences of the latest economic downturn have been profound. Most immediately, it is clear that the sharp increase in unemployment and underemployment caused by the latest recession has had a disproportionately large effect on young people. (p174-5)

What is apparent from the literature is that, in terms of social justice, young people as a group have been particularly hard hit by the economic turbulence of recent years – but some groups more than others. It is imperative when we study issues of social justice that we must pay heed to issues of intersectionality, what Davis (2008) refers to as 'the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in the individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions' (p68). Alongside this it must be stressed that these structural issues do not determine the course that young people will tread, but

contribute to the landscape that must be negotiated. These are points that will be drawn out throughout this chapter as well as when I turn to the young people in this study in chapter 6.

In order to fully understand the context for young people today, this literature review is structured around central issues and key concepts relevant to each sphere. These help to illuminate some of the forces that appear to be driving social injustice, particularly for some key groups of young people. I begin by focusing on the redistributive sphere before turning to the domain of recognition and conclude with a focus on the political domain.

### **3.2 Redistribution**

The first domain of justice that I focus on is that of redistribution. To reiterate, the redistributive sphere as conceived by Fraser (1995a; 2016b) identifies three types of socio-economic injustice:

1. **Exploitation/Expropriation** – appropriation of the fruit of one's own labour
2. **Economic marginalisation** – restriction to poorly paid employment or being denied an income altogether
3. **Deprivation** – denial of an adequate material standard of living

The aim of this section is to explicate some of the key redistributive issues said to be affecting young people today. For sure, some of these problems do not only impact upon young people. But there is growing evidence that issues such as increasing inequality (Robinson, 2016), growing un- and under employment (Cook, 2013), the growth of precarious work (Greer, 2016), the polarisation of the labour market (Raffass, 2016), the growing housing crisis in the UK (Lennartz et al, 2016) and the disintegration of the 'neo-liberal bargain' (Woodman and Wyn, 2015) all impact disproportionately on young people in comparison to their older contemporaries. Before looking in more detail at these issues, however, it is necessary to explore some of the 'background conditions' that are said to be contributing, to differing degrees, to them.

#### **3.2.1 Credentialism and the knowledge economy**

Although this thesis is focused on the post-school experience of the young people studied, it would be remiss to ignore the impact of their experience at school. Indeed,

this is a central component in terms of understanding the post-school trajectories that different young people take. Key to this in terms of social justice today are the concepts of credentialism and educational inflation. As Van de Werfhorst and Andersen (2005) state:

...a significant body of research indicates that education credentials have devalued during the twentieth century...there are too many workers who are highly educated, some of these workers are necessarily allocated to 'mid-level' jobs...this pattern has its most serious effects on the labour market opportunities of those with lower levels of education, thus widening the gap between educational levels in their occupational returns. (p323)

Since the 1970s governments have shaped educational systems to ensure national prosperity in an increasingly competitive global marketplace (Brown et al, 2003; Wyn, 2009; Simmons and Smyth, 2016). A central element of this is ensuring that the workforce is adequately educated in order for nation states to take their place as a competitive 'knowledge economy' within the global marketplace (Roberts, 2013b). Knowledge is seen as a commodity through which nations can position themselves as superior to rivals in order to entice business and industry with attractive human capital; 'schools, colleges, universities, think tanks...and research laboratories stand on the front line in the search for competitive advantage' (Brown et al, 2011: 20). Resultantly, young people are encouraged to stay in education for longer periods in order to pursue the credentials that evidence their attainment and ensure the competitiveness of the nation's economy in the global marketplace (Wyn and Woodman, 2006; Down and Smyth, 2012). As Kintrea et al (2015) note, a poorly educated workforce is seen as a barrier to the UK's competitiveness on the global stage.

A fundamental tenet of the knowledge economy agenda is that with greater levels of education, educational attainment increases and unemployment decreases; 'hence government's policies assume a close relationship between increased educational participation by young people and economic prosperity' (Woodman and Wyn, 2015: 56). Part of the promise of the knowledge economy is a belief that this investment in education by both individuals and the nation state will drive the creation of secure and high quality work. This is, in effect, the essence of the 'human capital' model – the belief that personal educational and economic betterment will lead to national economic competitiveness (Morrison, 2014). Critics argue however, that far from this being the case there is increasing evidence that the UK Labour market is becoming more polarised

(MacDonald, 2009; Nayak and Kehily, 2014). A report from the House of Lords (2016) on social mobility in the UK found there has been an increase in the number of professional and managerial roles as well as a significant increase in the number of low-skill jobs with a contraction in the number of mid-level jobs. This trend has been occurring for some time with studies evidencing this experience (Nolan, 2001; McDowell, 2002; Shildrick et al, 2012b; Ralston et al, 2016).

Such a scenario does not suggest the demand for a highly-skilled workforce, as promised by proponents of the 'knowledge economy', but credential inflation (Brown, 2003). Evidence suggests that those with higher level qualifications are able to compete for those professional and managerial opportunities whilst those with few (if any) qualifications are left to take their place in low-skilled and/or routine employment (Smith, 2009). Young people are now said to be locked in a form of credential 'arms race' in order to access the limited opportunities to obtain good employment (Mackie and Tett, 2013). Bills (2016) makes the important point that within this:

The credentials that job seekers present to the labour market matter less in themselves than how those credentials stack up in the total queue of job seekers. Schooling has, in brief, shifted from being primarily an absolute good to being essentially a positional good. (p65)

This has led to research suggesting that credentialism is exacerbating already existing inequalities, deepening the marginalisation of already excluded groups who are unable to take their place in this conflict (Bol and Weeden, 2014; Allen, 2015; Stahl, 2018). Importantly, this race begins in school, if not before.

### **3.2.2 Educational inequality**

Taking into account these factors is said to be critical in terms of unpicking the meritocratic myth which is hegemonic in the UK today (Littler, 2013; Calder, 2016). Education is presented as the great social equaliser and credentials are presented as a fair way in which those with the most qualifications rise to the surface and obtain the best jobs (Schubert, 2008; Dorling, 2010). As Côté (2016) puts it, this belief sees:

...youth as a period in which the social classes are mixed in a fair competition, such that those who emerge from a prolonged youth period with the best 'grades' can justifiably occupy the best jobs in the labour force and most prestigious positions in society...[education]...has become a new 'filter' of social reproduction, with credential attainment acting as a

smokescreen, obscuring structural obstacles by attributing success and failure to specific attributes of the individual in making youth transitions. (p856)

Structural factors such as class, gender, race and disability are said to have less salience, despite having just as tight a grip on future outcomes as ever (Simmons et al, 2014; France and Roberts, 2017). Educational outcomes continue to be strongly correlated with these structural factors and social reproduction continues unabated as social mobility has stalled in the UK (Threadgold and Nilan, 2009; France and Haddon, 2014). This is due to three reasons and education is central to these; 'i) economic inequality is high; ii) economic resources help to secure higher levels of educational attainment; and iii) educational wage premiums are sizeable' (McKnight and Reeves, 2017). Thus, economic inequality and factors such as disability and discrimination combined with the centrality in policy of credentialism appears to be creating a vicious circle of social immobility and deepening the marginalisation of those already on the periphery. And this is worsened for young people growing up today with the added dynamic of the increase in intergenerational inequality – the result of this is those young people without the necessary resources to alleviate any risk are placed at a severe disadvantage in comparison to their better resourced contemporaries (Lehmann, 2004; Reay, 2017).

However, research tells us that disadvantage and experience of poverty continue to shape the experience and attainment of young people whilst in school (Archer et al, 2014; Kintrea et al, 2015; Mowat, 2017). Young people who are encouraged to stay on at and engage with school and training are able to acquire the credentials and accumulate the skills necessary to compete in an ever more competitive and flexible labour market (Heinz, 2009; McCluskey, 2017). Labour market prospects are challenging for all young people today but are far more difficult still for those young people who enter the labour market without credentials. This is particularly the case during times of recession and is no different now as the economic downturn and its after-effects have impacted most on those with the least qualifications (Cook, 2013).

As Gabay-Egozi et al (2010) note, the martialling of familial resources and the characteristics of the educational system combine to ensure that young people from

more privileged backgrounds are afforded a significant advantage over more disadvantaged classmates:

The privileged classes benefit from a variety of material, cultural, and cognitive assets which they mobilize to gain a persistent edge in the competition for desired credentials, and the educational systems are often structured in ways that benefit them further. (p448)

Research continues to demonstrate how these families are able to draw upon and mobilise economic, social and cultural capital in order to gain advantage for their children in the educational system (Ball, 2003; Furlong, 2009; Archer et al, 2014). The result of this is a stubborn inequality in performance between young people from the most advantaged compared to the most disadvantaged areas of the country - an attainment gap which widens over the duration of young people's time in school. Rather than a glass ceiling it seems that more affluent parents are able to maintain a 'glass floor', preventing downward mobility and hoarding privilege for their children (McKnight, 2015). Mowat (2017) makes the point that:

...in Scotland, the attainment gap associated with socio-economic status is established before school and persists and, indeed, expands, over the course of formal schooling...at the end of formal schooling, the differential in attainment is the equivalent of 4 'A' grades in Scottish Higher examinations, reflected in a higher proportion of young people from affluent homes attaining a qualification at age 22-23 (63% v 14%). (p5-6)

In this way, more advantaged young people enjoy a substantial head-start in terms of accessing higher education and better paid and more secure employment opportunities (Furlong and Cartmel, 2009; Friedman and Laurison, 2019). The Scottish Government have made closing this attainment gap the central goal of their administration during their period in office between 2016 and 2021 (McCluskey, 2017).

Of course, it is not just socio-economic status that impacts upon educational achievement. When taking into consideration other factors a complex picture emerges. In Scotland, in contrast to the rest of the UK, ethnic minority students outperform white pupils (all excepting Scottish Gypsy/Travellers). However, this does not then translate into better post-school outcomes as will be discussed later. The worst performing group in terms of ethnicity and educational performance is white boys in receipt of free-school meals. The evidence also suggests the biggest disparity in educational performance is in geographical terms as those young people from the most socio-economically deprived



parts of Scotland record the worst educational outcomes in comparison to young people from more advantaged areas (EHRC, 2016; Scottish Government, 2017a). This is particularly pronounced when it comes to attaining the qualifications necessary for entry to higher education. Young people from the least deprived areas of Scotland are nearly twice as likely to obtain Higher level qualifications as their counterparts in the most deprived parts of Scotland<sup>7</sup>. As such, the evidence suggests a socio-economic penalty is a significant factor when looking at attainment in Scotland, albeit with some groups performing better than others. Young people with additional support needs (ASN) are half as likely to obtain Highers in comparison to young people without. Again though, attention must be paid to socio-economic factors within this group as Riddell (2009) argues that young disabled people who do go on to higher education tend to come from more advantaged families and:

...young disabled people who do not make it into higher education tend to have different 'types' of impairment (generally learning difficulties and/or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties). They come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and attract little respect and social recognition. (p88)

In this regard we can see an explicit reference to the interaction of maldistribution and misrecognition as non-recognition can impact on the support that young people with ASN receive in order to 'level the playing field' in terms of educational outcomes. It is important that attention is paid to these intersectional issues to tease out where factors such as poverty and disability work together (or not) to cement disadvantage.

### **3.2.3 (Un)Employment**

It is the breakdown of the 'transition' between education and employment, that crucial juncture that young people must cross to enable them to achieve perceived 'full adulthood', that has arguably the most significant impact on young people today (McDowell, 2002; Lehmann, 2004; Simmons and Thompson, 2011). The consequences of this breakdown move beyond the redistributive sphere into recognition and representation and these will be addressed in those sections. The most significant aspect of this breakdown has been the changing shape of the labour market that greets

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<sup>7</sup> This is based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). SIMD is a tool for identifying areas of poverty and inequality across Scotland. It is a relative measure and takes into account factors such as poverty, health, education and housing amongst others. More information and detail on this measurement can be found at Scottish Government (2016a).

young people upon leaving education. The rapid deindustrialisation and decline of the UK's manufacturing sector in the face of the neo-liberal reforms which began in the 1970s and continued throughout the 1980s, has had significant repercussions for young people. It was during this period of economic restructuring in the face of unsustainable inflation that the youth labour market collapsed and from which point it has never recovered (Wyn et al, 2008). The Keynesian-welfarist political settlement which had up until that point defined the post-war UK economy was abandoned, setting the stage for the monetarist agenda of the 'New Right' led by Margaret Thatcher (Peck and Theodore, 2000; Mizen, 2002). This turn to economic neo-liberalism has had significant repercussions for young people as the goal of full employment which had largely defined Keynesian Britain was abandoned and the manufacturing base of the UK was eroded.

The biggest impact has been the decline in availability of low-skilled work in areas such as manufacturing and industry for those with few qualifications and those growing up in former industrial areas (Smith, 2009). This is certainly the case in Porttown with the closure of major industry and warehousing which took place throughout the twentieth century (Anon<sup>8</sup>, 1979; Anon, 2014). As Heinz (2009) notes, it was towards the end of the twentieth century that we saw the demise:

...of an institutionalised (male) life course pattern, consisting of education, work, and retirement, mirroring the life phases of youth, adulthood and old age. This pattern was based on age-graded, standard transitions between these life spheres. (p5)

Although Goodwin and O'Connor (2009) dispute the alleged linearity of these school-to-work transitions for post-war working-class young people, there is little doubt that the age-graded pattern of transition remains socially institutionalised for young people today (France and Roberts, 2015). In the contemporary context less than a third of young people in Scotland leave school and enter employment at the earliest opportunity owing – largely – to the decimation of the youth labour market (Scottish Government, 2017a).

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<sup>8</sup> References pertaining to the locale have been anonymised throughout this thesis to protect the identity of participants. For further discussion on this see section 5.10, chapter 5 on ethics.

Youth unemployment has dominated policy agendas across the Western world (and beyond) over the past decade, and particularly since the 2008 global financial crash (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2015). Indeed, youth unemployment is a global phenomenon with the International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2017) reporting that global youth unemployment sits at over 13%, the highest since records began in 1991. This is three times the rate of unemployment for their older contemporaries and this is also the case here in Scotland. Whilst Scotland has been more fortunate than other nations, the rate of youth unemployment did peak at over 20% between 2010 and 2012, and currently sits at around 10%. This rate stubbornly remains at between two and three times the level of those twenty-five and older, as it did during the crisis, with approximately 28,000 young people currently unemployed (Scottish Government, 2018a). When we analyse who unemployment affects in Scotland, a complex picture emerges. The Scottish Equal Opportunities Committee found that ethnic minority groups were more likely to be unemployed than white people, despite performing better academically (Scottish Parliament, 2016). Again, it is important to pay attention to particular groups, as the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC, 2016) found that Muslim people face the worst outcomes in terms of unemployment. This prompted the Scottish Equal Opportunities Committee to state:

...if Scotland is to harness its talent and avoid placing an ethnic penalty on its young people, diversity in the workplace should be valued and seen as a positive goal...existing employment and recruitment practices must be improved otherwise we cannot confront any underlying racism and discrimination. (Scottish Parliament, 2016: 2)

Young people with disabilities are also more likely to be unemployed when compared to all young adults and are more likely to be offered an inadequate choice of education and training opportunities than other young people, often with mistaken expectations about capabilities (Scottish Government, 2017a). It is also necessary to pay attention to spatial differences as evidence suggests that young people from more deprived areas of Scotland are less likely to enter ‘positive destinations’<sup>9</sup> post-school and more likely to experience unemployment (*Ibid*).

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Positive Destinations’ is the term used in policy by the Scottish Government for school leavers who are engaged in or are going on to participate in some form of education, employment or training upon leaving school.

### 3.2.4 Precarity

Of course, these statistics only provide a snap-shot of the youth labour market – and are only part of the picture. What is less clear is the nature (and quality) of the jobs young people are able to access and how these are, or are not, facilitating a stable transition (in terms of school to work) from youth to independent adulthood. For young people growing up today, their transition from school to work is qualitatively different to previous generations – not by choice but by circumstances (Stokes and Wyn, 2007; Roberts, 2011; France and Roberts, 2015).

Many authors discuss the growing marginalisation of a certain section of populations from secure and stable employment in terms of a growing ‘precariat’ (Standing, 2014; Savage et al, 2015; Robinson, 2016). Due to the wide ranging nature of those that are said to make up the precariat, it can be a difficult label to define. Standing (2014) defines the precariat as a class that sits not only below the ‘elite’, but also beneath what he terms the ‘salarial’, the remnants of the old working-class who are still in relatively stable full-time employment. He also distinguishes between what he terms ‘grinners’ and ‘groaners’ within this cohort:

Among youth, the ‘grinners’ are students and travelling backpackers, happy to take casual jobs with no long-term future; the ‘groaners’ are those unable to enter the labour market through apprenticeships or the equivalent, or competing with ‘cheaper’ old agers with no need for enterprise benefits.  
(p102)

For the grinners labour market precarity is perhaps a temporary state of affairs as these young people, with more resources to draw upon, are only in it briefly (or by choice).

For the groaners however, precarity can become a permanent fixture, with little view of escape.

Precarity is argued to be a growing global phenomenon and one that has been exacerbated by the economic turbulence of recent years. In some parts of the world, such as South-East Asia and the Middle East, employees in precarious employment are said to make up nearly two-thirds of the workforce (ILO, 2016). Women and young people are particularly over-represented in the ‘informal’ sector. This is also significantly impacting upon nations in the developed world, as Means (2017) notes that, ‘a staggering number of youth across the OECD, around 40 percent, are

precariously employed in temporary jobs, typically with low pay and few if any benefits' (p341). Indeed, young people today are said to be the 'vanguard' of the new precarious class as it is their experience in the labour market that is mainly punctuated by the rise in insecure employment (MacDonald, 2009; Woodman and Wyn, 2015). Precariousness is not exclusive to young people, but research suggests that it is among younger and less educated individuals that there is the strongest evidence for the emergence of widespread employment insecurity (Simmons and Thompson, 2011; Shildrick et al, 2012c; Means, 2017).

Returning to the discussion on the importance of credentialism, the evidence suggests that young people without the necessary qualifications to compete in the ever competitive labour market can find themselves economically marginalised (De Cuyper et al, 2008; Inui, 2009). Pascual and Martin (2017) argue that young people can be lost in a 'social limbo', relegated to a 'secondary labour market' characterised by the poorest conditions of work and pervasive un- and underemployment (MacDonald et al, 2005; MacDonald, 2009; Shildrick et al, 2012c). Whilst rates of employment have recovered for young people in Scotland since the recession there has been a growth in insecure work and underemployment and young people are particularly affected by these changes. Again, to emphasise, the evidence suggests that this is primarily affecting young people with low educational attainment who are more likely to be found churning between precarious work and unemployment (Scottish Government, 2017a). An accurate estimation of the numbers of young Scots trapped in this labour market periphery does not exist but there is little doubt it has been growing since the recession (Montgomery and Baglioni, 2015; Thompson, 2015). In terms of the broader picture, however, a complex picture emerges, with evidence suggesting that amongst the youth cohort the groups most affected by insecure employment are young men, the least educated and young Black and Asian people (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010; Simmons and Thompson 2011; TUC, 2015).

However, precarity is also said to be growing amongst less disadvantaged youth. Much research points toward the breakdown of what has been called the 'neo-liberal bargain' (Heinz, 2009; Brown et al, 2011; Woodman and Wyn, 2015). Whereas in the past the fulfilment of higher education and the achievement of credentials would lead to financial rewards, this is no longer the case for a great many. This is one area that

appears to be uniting young people as a cohort – as more and less disadvantaged young people are united in finding limited opportunities in the labour market and being compelled into precarious employment (MacDonald, 2011). Research has found that since the recession young graduates have found it increasingly difficult to find secure and stable employment. Growing numbers of young graduates find themselves underemployed, in temporary work, on zero-hour contracts or having to work in unpaid internships (Trott, 2013; Pennycook et al, 2013; Percival and Hesmondhalgh, 2014). As France and Roberts (2015) note, ‘essentially the current situation represents a blip in history because precarity is not new, just new to the middle classes’ (p226). However, a university education is still of relative value as young graduates are less likely to be unemployed than those without university qualifications but perhaps unable to find high-skilled employment (BIS, 2015).

And this is an important point, for there is still considerable inequality in Scotland in terms of access into higher education. Latest statistics show more post-school young people entering higher education in Scotland than ever, at 40.3% (Scottish Government, 2017b). However, Blackburn et al (2016) found that ‘Scottish 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas are still more than four times likely to go straight to university than those from the least advantaged areas’ (p2). This is the largest disparity of any of the countries in the UK. This inequality is also reflected across the UK in terms of institutions attended, with disadvantaged students less likely to attend Russell Group and other selective universities, even when they attain comparable results. This is also the case for minority ethnic young people (Hinton-Smith, 2012; Bhopal, 2014, Morris, 2015). It is again, another indicator of better-off families working to maintain indicators of privilege (Ball, 2003b; France and Roberts, 2017). Despite (or because of) more young people attending higher education than ever before and due to educational inflation however, in order to gain a significant advantage from higher education, individuals are said to require post-graduate qualifications. Again, these are more likely to be accessed by students from more affluent backgrounds with particular challenges for minority ethnic students and those with disabilities (Côté, 2014a; Mattocks and Briscoe-Palmer, 2016). There are parallels here with Berlant’s (2006; 2011) ‘cruel optimism’ - whereby the promise of a better life aided by the attainment of the university degree has largely disappeared for many, if not most, young people today.

### 3.2.5 Beyond higher education

But what of those young people that do not go on to Higher Education? Many researchers suggest that there is little work done on those young people termed the 'missing middle' (Roberts, 2011; Roberts, 2012; 2013a; Woodman, 2013). It is argued that these young people are often missed in research and public policy which tend to focus upon specific groups – particularly those at the greatest risk of marginalisation (Smith, 2009; MacDonald, 2011). However, these young people, it is argued, are often found in jobs without training (JWT) or in employment that 'pays working-class' but is upper working-class in terms of the white-collar nature of the employment. Roberts (2011) suggests that despite appearances, there can be significant issues in terms of pay and security in the nature of 'middling work' relative to those who 'make it' and this can limit opportunities to obtain decent housing or in terms of career progression. Young people in this category can be in a wide variety of employment, such as routine office work, retail and hospitality. Roberts (2013b) suggests that there has been an important change for these young people in comparison to previous generations:

Middling youth today are vulnerable, which has not always been the case. The old economy offered secure middling jobs for the middle bands of school-leavers...the present-day middle is being squeezed in several ways. Real incomes and living standards may be threatened, but there are further dimensions to the squeeze. The number of middling jobs has diminished. The lower-skilled manual and non-manual jobs that remain are more fragile. More of the jobs are precarious - part-time, temporary and/or low paid relative to the earnings of managers and professionals. (p7)

They are not the biggest losers but their potential social mobility can be limited and precariousness can be a feature that peppers their experience (Seddon et al, 2013). As such, due to the changing nature of the labour market, researchers argue that the current class structure is finely graded and attention has to be paid to the full range of experience that different groups of young people find upon leaving school (Roberts, 2011; Hodkinson, 2016).

Beyond the 'missing middle' the growth of credentialism has increased the risk of those leaving school early, or with few qualifications, being relegated to the aforementioned secondary labour market. Much research has been conducted into the most marginalised young people and there is substantial evidence that they are becoming trapped in the 'churn' of poor work, government training schemes, low-level

educational programmes and recurrent periods of unemployment (Peck, 2001; Simmons et al, 2014; Hardgrove et al, 2015). Far from being a 'stepping stone' or 'foot on the ladder' to better work, employment in the labour market periphery is argued to be a dead-end or, at best, a 'waterwheel' that dips 'them under the official poverty line before lifting them above it, before the wheel turns again, forever churning between low-paid jobs and even lower benefit payments' (Shildrick et al, 2012a: 191). More pernicious however, is the growing evidence which suggests that far from being a temporary 'blip' in young people's labour market careers such early churning can have a 'scarring' effect – that these early experiences carry lasting impacts that can follow them well into their 30s and beyond (Knabe and Rätzl, 2011; Nilsen and Reiso, 2011; Ralston et al, 2016).

These can be felt in several different ways; firstly, the most obvious example is that these precarious positions rarely provide lasting or meaningful skills training or qualification and this limits the scope of progression (McQuaid et al, 2014). The second is that repeated experience of the churn can have a 'discouraging' effect on young people. Without meaningful (and stable) progression routes young people can lose motivation in their search for employment (Strathdee, 2013; Simmons et al, 2014). Thirdly, there is evidence that participation in employability courses or continued engagement in poor quality jobs can result in employers being reluctant to take on individuals with 'poor work' histories (Belt and Richardson, 2005; Shildrick et al, 2012c). Lastly, there is growing evidence that early labour market exclusion leads to worse outcomes in terms of lower average incomes over the life span (Ralston et al, 2016). This is accentuated by the growth of what is termed the 'hour-glass economy' with the hollowing out of middle ranking jobs (Goos and Manning, 2007; Holmes and Mayhew, 2012; Dorling, 2015). Instead, there has been a rise in insecure employment and an expansion of lower-level jobs and subsequently fewer opportunities to escape these (Orton, 2015). Because of these effects, Hillmert (2011) writes that early labour market marginalisation can act as a form of 'social closure' – that over time it becomes ever more challenging to bridge this early disadvantage and these effects also contribute to labour market polarisation.

Those opportunities that do exist at the bottom of the labour market, such as employability programmes and other youth training initiatives, are argued to offer



limited opportunity to young people to develop skills or a work-based education that can act as a springboard to improved opportunity (MacDonald, 2009; Russell et al, 2010; Roberts, 2011; Pemberton et al, 2016). Young people in these positions are resultantly limited in their ability to improve their relative labour market position. Instead, as McDowell (2009) notes:

Young working-class people without educational capital...are now restricted to low-paid work at the bottom end of the labour market, in jobs with few prospects and characterised by instability and high rates of labour turnover, as well as poor terms and conditions. (61)

In other words, for those young people that leave school with few credentials and do not go on to higher education the options upon leaving school can be limited. The post-school outlook is said to be, at best, a path toward a vocational education which has been entirely unsuccessful in disrupting 'the strong correlation between social advantage, school achievement and the competitive academic curriculum' (Smyth et al. 2009: 104).

Training and employability programmes receive particular opprobrium in the literature. In Scotland such programmes tend to be targeted at young people who require extra support before entering the 'mainstream' labour market (Baglioni, 2013). A not inconsequential minority of young people in Scotland leave school each year to take their place in these programmes (approximately 3% of school leavers in 2016/17) (Scottish Government, 2017c). The research that has been conducted in the UK on these types of programmes suggests that they offer qualifications that lack substance and credibility in the labour market, further distancing them from their contemporaries who go on to higher education (Russell et al, 2010; Smyth et al, 2013; Simmons et al, 2014). Many authors make the point that rather than offering qualifications with genuine labour market purchase, they instead work on 'soft skills' such as flexible and compliant behaviours, attitudes and dispositions (Worth, 2003; Shildrick et al, 2012d; Simmons and Smyth, 2016). Worse still, evidence suggests that many young people on these programmes have reported feeling victims of exploitation, undertaking workfare-style placements for very little (if any) remuneration (Peck and Theodore, 2000; Roberts, 2009; Reiter and Schlimbach, 2015; Simmons and Smyth, 2016). In contrast, Russell et al (2010; 2011) although criticising these programmes, found in their research that the employability programmes were valued by young people in terms of building

confidence and improving some basic skills. The problem, they suggest, is that there exists in the UK a 'pre-vocational dilemma' with these programmes offering qualifications and experience that lack genuine credibility in today's highly competitive labour market, but credible qualifications appear out of reach for the young people on these courses. In an increasingly squeezed labour market and with the growth of credentialism this seems to be having particular consequences for these young people. Indeed, for some these programmes are viewed as little more than a form of 'warehousing' for marginalised young people in the absence of employment opportunities (Roberts, 2009; Chadderton and Colley, 2012; Simmons et al, 2014).

### **3.2.6 Welfare reform**

The situation facing young people on the margins of the labour market has been made even more precarious by the gradual erosion of their entitlement to even the most minimum of social security. Young people have been particular victims of welfare reform under the Coalition and Conservative governments since 2010 (Hills et al, 2015; Reeves and Loopstra, 2017; Wenham, 2017). It is already the case that young people under the age of 25 receive a lower rate of social security welfare benefit. Jobseeker's allowance is also being phased out for 18-21 year olds and being replaced by a 'Youth Allowance' which comes with increased conditionality – a commitment to engaging in job-seeking, training or education and after six months, a *requirement* to go on training, an apprenticeship or engage in some form of community work (Stephens and Blenkinsopp, 2015). There is an argument that young people may in fact require additional resources, not less, due to the additional costs driven by the delay in transition and the expense of education, housing and the search for employment (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; France, 2008). Indeed, Sukarieh and Tannock (2011) argue that this is part of a wider misrecognition of young people, driven by the processes of neo-liberalism:

As the category of youth is extended upward into adulthood, the childlike characteristics of adults are emphasised: adults as youth (emerging adults) are constructed as immature, still in development...and consequently, may be said to be less entitled to make claims on such things as a family wage job, career stability or the means to live independently...[and]...to normalise the erosion of social and economic standards of living that has taken place for large segments of younger generations under conditions of neoliberal restructuring. (p683-4)

With the erosion of opportunities for young people to enter the labour market, so the period of 'youth' is put forward as evidence that they do not require the same resources as 'adults'. Writers such as Côté (2014a; 2016) and Sukarieh and Tannock (2011; 2015b) argue that neo-liberal processes help to drive the prolongation of the youth phase as this gives business access to cheap labour, a large consumer market and fires the almost hegemonic belief that they have less right to state support. As a consequence, an argument can be made that this is a form of institutional misrecognition that cuts across the entire youth cohort and fuels maldistribution. But, again, one that impacts on some young people more than others.

For young people that do not adhere to the stricter guidelines of access to social security they can find themselves sanctioned and having to survive without any money at all. Under this new regime research has shown that young people are more likely than their older contemporaries to be sanctioned (Crisp and Powell, 2017; Reeves and Loopstra, 2017). Such measures serve to deepen the poverty of already impoverished and marginalised individuals. Of course, it is well documented that social security is inadequate, even if accessed, set well below the poverty line with young people entitled to less money than those 25 and over (Fitzpatrick et al, 2016). Furthermore, the time, stress, difficulties in the application process and stigma attached to accessing social security is often enough to deter individuals from even applying for social security – what Shildrick et al (2012a) term the 'missing workless'. Such predicaments can leave young people without any income at all, sometimes for weeks and months, deepening the poverty of already marginalised individuals and families.

From 2016 the UK government has also withdrawn young people's (18 to 21 year olds) automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit. This is particularly challenging for young people as leaving the parental home at an early age is strongly associated with poverty and other associated negative outcomes (King, 2016). The government has attempted to alleviate concern by stating that decisions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis but as yet it is unclear what outcomes this change in social security entitlement has had. Regardless of these assurances, homelessness groups such as Shelter and Centrepont have been outspoken in their criticism of the policy change – voicing concern that the outcome will be to further impoverish and threaten the most marginalised of young

people, particularly those who wish to flee abusive home environments (Huffington Post, 2016). This situation is captured by Hoolachan et al (2017):

While most young people face difficulties in negotiating the housing and labour markets, those from low-socioeconomic backgrounds fare the worst. Existing literature has emphasised the importance of family support for facilitating smoother transitions...young people without family support who are in precarious employment and/or reliant on benefits face extremely difficult circumstances...as welfare reform and austerity measures intensify in the UK...the welfare safety-net available for the young has been significantly eroded. (p75)

With changes to tax credits also having a greater impact on young families there is little doubt that young people have been particularly affected in terms of spending cuts, targeted welfare conditionality and less generous benefits (Browne, 2015; Crisp and Powell, 2017). Côté (2014a) takes this argument further, suggesting that a systematic age-based redistribution of wealth is taking place. He proposes that young people can now be characterised as a 'class' within themselves as a result. France and Threadgold (2016) although acknowledging that young people have been particularly impacted in the wake of the financial crisis, make the important point that there are significant divisions and inequalities amongst young people – along lines of class, race, gender and disability amongst others. This makes it extremely problematic to describe it as a 'class' within itself as to do so risks missing the considerable economic, cultural and political inequalities within the youth cohort. This becomes even more apparent as I now turn my gaze towards issues of recognitional injustice.

### **3.3 Recognition**

The second dimension of injustice identified by Fraser is that of misrecognition, or injustice as a form of social exclusion. Bufacchi (2012) writes that:

Resources of a more social nature, such as enjoying the benefits of social networks and community and family life, are as important to a person as natural resources. It is an injustice to be excluded from the benefits of social resources as it is to be excluded from natural resources. (9)

The recognitional sphere is primarily concerned with the *relational* dynamics within society – who is afforded esteem and respect, for example. Wolff (2008) provides a neat summation when he writes, 'the central idea is that a society of equals has to create conditions of mutual respect, and self-respect, and thereby overcome hierarchical

divisions' (p24). Misrecognition tends to involve a downward exercise of power from dominant social groups denying the social respect necessary for minority groups to achieve participatory parity. As outlined in chapter 2, Fraser (2011) notes that although the individual is the ultimate 'unit' of justice (or moral concern), misrecognition occurs by virtue of being part of a wider group identity (for example that social disrespect occurs due to issues of racism, androcentrism, classism, ableism). Of course, as much research indicates, it is also important not to homogenise groups along lines of race, gender, class and disability as these are inevitably varied (Eamets et al, 2017; Bessant, 2018).

Fraser (2003) identifies three types of misrecognition, rooted in the 'social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication' (p13):

1. **Cultural domination** – being subject to communication that is hostile to one's own
2. **Non-recognition** – being socially and culturally invisible
3. **Disrespect** – suffering denigration and hostility due to stereotypical representations

As with the redistributive sphere, this section will discuss the recognitional challenges drawn from the literature on young people under the headings of key concepts and ideas. Again, not all these are unique to young people, but I argue that they appear to pose particular challenges to the youth cohort and in some cases, more so to specific groups. This section will begin with a critical reflection on what is said to be the growing individualisation of our society.

### **3.3.1 Individualisation**

It is argued that one of the major effects of the growing neo-liberalisation of our societies has been the decline in the influence of social structures in shaping the life paths of young people as they make their way to full adulthood. Key proponents of the 'individualisation thesis' include writers such as Giddens (1991), Castells (1996; 1997), Bauman (2000) and (perhaps most importantly) Ulrich Beck (1992; 2007) who argue that the traditional structures of society have become fragmented and as a result we have witnessed the emergence of the so-called 'risk society' (France and Roberts, 2015). The institutions which helped shaped the traditional life path such as family, religion, community, neighbourhood as well as structural factors such as class, race, gender are

argued to be breaking down. As a result old certainties are being replaced with complex and uncertain individual futures (Leccardi, 2014; Howie and Campbell, 2016).

Proponents of the individualisation thesis emphasise that they are not arguing that structures no longer influence the life course of young people today but rather that their salience in the lives of youth have been considerably diminished – that their influence has become more opaque. Beck (2007) writes that ‘I...emphasize that individualization is misunderstood if it is seen as a process which derives from a conscious choice or preference on the part of the individual. The crucial idea is this, individualization really is imposed on the individual by modern institutions’ (p681).

Beck (1997) compares late-modern individualisation with first-modern structures which he describes as being nested like ‘Russian Dolls’ – the traditional division of labour that supported the nuclear family. This in turn supported the Fordist mode of production which subsequently buttressed the traditional class structure which offered the working-class a collective identity (Payne, 2000; Roberts, 2009). The breakdown of these structures has been keenly felt by subsequent generations. Farrugia (2013) makes the point that:

...the primary driving force of these structural changes has been the capitalist labour market: treating workers as individual owners of their own labour, the post-Fordist labour market disembeds them from collective forms of social life...with the breakdown of Fordist modes of production; the structural basis for collective class identities has also broken down. These structures have been replaced with conditions of widespread structural insecurity. (p681)

In comparison to previous generations young people are seen to have to rely much more on their own resources and individual commitment to navigate the transition to adulthood (Leccardi, 2012; Woodman and Wyn, 2015).

### **3.3.2 The choice biography**

Many writers in youth sociology – following Beck – have put forward the notion that the ‘choice biography’ has replaced the standard biography which defined the life course in industrial modernity (Du Bois Reymond, 1998; te Riele, 2004). Again, the linearity of a standard biography in times past is contested but there is little doubt that young people are expected to exercise much more agency and choice post-school today (France and Haddon, 2014; Di Blasi et al, 2016). Francombe-Webb and Silk (2016), for example,

write that 'the dictates of neoliberalism incentivizes the subject to become the instigator of their own biography, modelling the responsible, flexible self...through an ethic of self-discipline, subjects are *expected* to publicly perform their worth ('correct life choices') as evidence of their value' (p654 – *emphasis in original*). Importantly, this expectation is said to be driven by the institutions that operate to structure the lives of young people (Lees, 2014; Leccardi, 2014).

Perhaps the most significant factor in these processes, as Lehmann (2004) writes, is that this process of individualisation is primarily a direct result 'of labour-market restructuring, workplace reorganizations, and changing educational demand. As a consequence, all young people regardless of social background, gender, or race are faced with increased uncertainty and risk' (p380). We can see here a direct link with the emergence of precarity as discussed in the previous section. And again, for some (the gridders as described by Standing (2014)), such developments can be a positive, offering young people the freedom to define their own paths, explore their identity and undertake activities such as travelling, a situation Arnett (2000; 2006) describes as a period of *emerging adulthood*. And indeed, there is ample evidence to suggest that young people are happy to embrace the responsibility of defining their own life narrative (Evans, 2002; Wyn and Woodman, 2007; Furlong et al, 2011).

However, many writers have criticised the concept of emerging adulthood and the notion of the choice biography (Woodman, 2009; Leccardi, 2012; Lees, 2014). Critics argue that these concepts obscure the structural impediments that constrain an individual's capacity for making a secure transition to adulthood and limits the 'choices' available, particularly to those young people with less resources. This is crucial in terms of the misrecognition of those young people who do not possess the resources to alleviate the risk attached to the destructuralised paths young people are said to have to tread today. In terms of social justice, if we consider those young people who do not have the same resources to enable them to take control of and construct a 'successful' choice biography they can be held individually responsible for these failures:

Whereas previously young people could see what possible futures awaited them now they cannot see where they are heading. Social change is eroding traditional forms of knowledge and communication...faced with a proliferation of choices young people's biographies are increasingly reflexive...with these opportunities also come increased risk for young

people, in the form of guilt or blame if they end up on the margins of society as a result of their own choices (Valentine, 2003: 40).

Despite the evidence that structural factors continue to exert just as much control on the lives of young people, the fact that these are more obscured means that those young people who don't construct the 'correct' biography can find themselves blamed for being unable to do so (Wyn, 2009; France and Haddon, 2014). Bryant and Ellard (2015) write that:

...while more privileged young people encounter opportunities facilitated by significant others such as parents or friends...the stories of our participants revealed a distinct absence of this. Families and friends often did not function as social capital because they were absent, or there was little trust and reciprocity, or families and friends themselves possessed little capital upon which young people could draw. (p492)

In this way we can appreciate the importance of different resources available to young people which allow them to construct their choice biography. As Gabay-Egozi et al (2010) notes, processes of choice are presented as an equalising mechanism but instead tend to accentuate already embedded inequalities.

To take the school to work transition as an example, the individualised conception of unemployment means that those young people caught in the aforementioned 'churn' can find themselves blamed and demonised for their perceived shortcomings – labelled as feckless, lazy, idle and/or irresponsible (Inui, 2009; Jensen, 2014; Standing, 2014; France and Threadgold, 2016). However, research confirms that young people want to work and are all too aware of the stigma attached to those who do not do so (Worth, 2003; Shildrick et al, 2012c; Simmons et al, 2014; Simmons and Smyth, 2016). Evans (2007) makes the important point that young people 'were rarely fatalistic. Even among unemployed people, responses suggested frustrated agency rather than fatalistic acceptance of things as they are' (p90-1). Instead, her concept of 'bounded agency' points to the idea that young people are displaying remarkable agency in attempting to get on but are hindered by structural factors such as localised unemployment. Furlong and Cartmel (2007) call this the 'epistemological fallacy' of late modernity. Furlong (2009) describes this as:

...a growing disjuncture between objective and subjective dimensions of life whereby underlying class relationships may be obscured as a result of a diversification of experiences. With young people following a



much greater variety of educational and labour market routes, they are increasingly encouraged to seek solutions on an individual, rather than collective, basis even though outcomes are strongly conditioned by factors such as social class and gender. (p349)

Links between social class origin and destination remain as close as they ever have, but as structural influences become more opaque, young people are argued to be less aware of these factors and, more perniciously, can blame themselves for any 'failures' to move on (Roberts, 2009; Simmons and Thompson, 2011; Bufacchi, 2012; Woodman and Wyn, 2015). France and Haddon (2014) argue, however, that young people are reflexively aware of structural impediments within their life. They suggest that instead, the hegemonic project of neo-liberalism has resulted in young people displaying neo-liberal subjectivities – recognising the structuring of social life but willing (and struggling) to take personal responsibility for their future selves. Schubert (2008) writes that misrecognition in this form acts as a sort of 'symbolic violence' as the institutionalisation of a supposedly meritocratic system – the attainment of educational credentials – teaches young people that their failure to 'make it' is one of their own making and down to their lack of natural talent. Again, we see misrecognition and maldistribution intersecting with the erasure of issues such as poverty, racism and other structural factors.

### **3.3.3 Institutional misrecognition**

This has institutional repercussions too. As many authors note, the processes described above are embedded in social policy. As Stokes and Wyn (2007) note:

...policy approaches that focus only on the links between study and work tend to over-emphasise the linearity of this process and its direction...the assumption of linear movement that underpins the metaphor of transition masks the reality of more complex and often chaotic processes in young people's lives. (p498)

France and Roberts (2015) make the point that as a result those young people who don't make these 'normative' transitions are seen almost as faulty and policy helps to frame the alleged linearity of transition as 'common sense' despite the breakdown, particularly, of the school to work transition for young people. Indeed, the young unemployed have long been seen as problematic, not only in media discourse but also in policy through pejorative labels such as Status Zero (Williamson, 1999), NEET (Not in

education, employment or training) (MacDonald, 2011) and in terms such as 'disaffected' (Mackie and Tett, 2013). It is argued that this has been a consistent feature in social policy for many years; that the 'problem' of unemployment is firmly located in the supply side of the labour market and structural barriers to work are overlooked (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Patrick, 2014). Thus, the argument can be made that the misrecognition of the experience of young people on the margins of the labour market is institutionally embedded.

### **3.3.3.1 Employability**

This is said to be reinforced by the dominance of the economic agenda in policy and the foregrounding of *employability* as the vehicle to social integration (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Lindsay et al, 2007). The important point in terms of misrecognition is that it is argued that whereas 'unemployment' represents a mix of supply and demand measures and encompasses the structural issues that can impinge on people's ability to take their place in the workforce, employability represents a major shift (Clarke and Patrickson, 2008). Now the onus is on the supply side – the individual – to ensure their employability and attractiveness to potential employers. Structural factors such as class, gender and race are side-lined as the current conceptualisation of employability aids the belief that competition in the labour market is based on a meritocratic contest (Brown et al, 2003; Spohrer, 2011). But as outlined previously, evidence suggests structural factors still play a large role in shaping opportunities, chances of educational achievement and post-school destinations (Simmons and Thompson, 2011; Woodman and Wyn, 2015). In this way employability appears as a natural continuation of the credentialism of the educational field. As Wyn and Woodman (2006) argue, 'not all young people face the same constraints and the choices available are far from equal. Nonetheless, structures do not 'determine' youth - they create conditions that young people struggle against, attempt to work with and negotiate' (p507). Again, the interplay between structure and agency is fundamental to young people's chances in the increasingly competitive labour market. But the discourse of employability can work to airbrush out structural impediments to employment, centred as it is on the capabilities and attitudes of the individual. Crisp and Powell (2017) perhaps capture this argument best when they write that:

...the notion of employability is more than simply a form of supply-side orthodoxy. Rather it has been colonised as a form of discursive legitimisation for neoliberal policies which seek to reduce the costs of supporting young people while simultaneously compelling their engagement with 'flexible' and insecure labour markets. This is likely to accentuate the difficulties faced by marginalised youth and contribute to their continued stigmatisation. (p1786)

Therefore, the concept of employability can be argued to contribute to the misrecognition of young people unable to take their place in the struggle for employment. Another example of misrecognition and maldistribution intersecting.

### **3.3.3.2 Aspiration**

This situation appears to have also been compounded in recent years by a political and policy focus on the notion of aspiration. Politicians in the UK have sought to blame unemployment, economic stagnation and declining social mobility in the UK on the low aspirations of young people (Clair et al., 2013; Baker et al., 2014; Berrington et al, 2016). This is problematic in terms of misrecognition, however. As Gale and Parker (2015) note, in current policy the ambition to succeed in higher education is seemingly the only aspiration that counts as legitimate, 'other ways of living or other desired futures are devalued and discounted, pejoratively expressed in terms of students' deficits' (p85). For example, much research suggests that for many young people, aspirations are gendered, as well as classed, particularly for those leaving school with few qualifications. Research finds these young men applying for lower skilled forms of manual labour and young women pursuing care work and employment in the hairdressing and beauty industry (Arnot and Miles, 2005; Batsleer, 2013a; Scottish Government, 2017a). Stahl and Baars (2016) argue that such aspirations are deemed inadequate and those that possess them almost as deficient.

Others go further and suggest that aspiration is being re-conceptualised, where working-class families can be remade as middle-class (Allen, 2014; Hoskins and Barker, 2017). Of course, such a view serves to immediately discredit and devalue the legitimate ambitions of young people who seek alternative pathways through life than that of higher education. As Roberts (2009) notes, 'sixteen-year-olds who insist that they want proper jobs and who try to avoid all alternatives have become a new problem group...they are now a small minority of the total youth population but are concentrated

in particular inner-city districts and on council estates' (p358). As various authors have noted, aspirations and those neoliberal subjectivities desired by policy (those that encompass a willingness to embrace flexible and individualised pathways) tend to be highly classed (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Stahl, 2015; Stahl and Habib, 2017). Yet, as Appadurai (2004) notes, aspirations are still conceived in policy as individualised despite being formed within the socio-historic milieu of people's lives. It has been a narrative in policy that disadvantaged localities can have a negative influence on young people's aspiration (Kintrea et al, 2015). However, much research has been conducted with marginalised youth and there is very little evidence of any 'aspiration poverty', even amongst the most disadvantaged young people (Finlay et al, 2010; Archer et al, 2014; Hartas, 2016). Instead, evidence suggests that young people's future ambitions remain high but their expectations are circumscribed by factors such as local labour market conditions, an awareness of their relative labour market position in terms of qualifications, discrimination and the limited financial, social and cultural resources at their disposal (Archer et al, 2010; Kintrea et al, 2015; Carabelli and Lyon, 2016).

Allied to this, research consistently finds that young people do not want to live a life on social security and possess conventional desires for their future selves – a stable (and for the most part, modest) job, a home, family and other signifiers of adult life (Finlay et al, 2010; Simmons et al, 2014; Hoskins and Barker, 2017; Wenham, 2017).

Misrecognition here fails to appreciate the remarkable agency that young people are displaying in attempting to move on, and can fail to take into account structural impediments such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and localised unemployment amongst other factors (Roberts, 2007). As MacDonald et al (2005) noted in their study of young people in Teesside, 'what we see in our interviewees' biographical accounts is their various, resourceful, resilient ways to negotiate the wreckage of the collapsed 'economic scaffolding' that previously enabled transitions to a stable, working-class, adult life' (p885).

Research on aspirations also indicates a complex interplay between race and gender and race and class which reflects shifting cultural norms, growing economic pressures and the aspirations of young women (Dwyer and Shah, 2009; Shah et al, 2010).

Bagguley and Hussain (2016), for example, found that young British South-Asian women had aspirations for occupational mobility but found considerable resistance

from within their own communities as these clashed with traditional parental and cultural expectations. Unpicking the structural and agentic interplay that circumscribes aspirations requires a nuanced and critical lens. And, of course, attention has to be paid to the different structural factors that can impinge on young minority ethnic people as unfortunately evidence of racial discrimination and stereotyping still exist in the UK (Alexander et al, 2015; Isakjee, 2016; Kelly, 2016; Scottish Government, 2017a). As Morris (2015) notes:

Discrimination and prejudice (both conscious and unconscious) play a role – leading to a vicious cycle whereby ethnic minority young people face considerable obstacles to entering work and as a result feel like some opportunities are ‘not for them’. This is supported by a wealth of experimental data showing racial discrimination by employers and recruitment agencies....ethnic minority people generally have high educational and employment aspirations...but sustained labour market discrimination can foster lower levels of self-confidence. (p7)

The discourse of individual responsibility has become so hegemonic that there is evidence of a ‘post-racialist whitewashing’ of racist structures which can result in Black middle-class individuals arguing that discrimination is no longer an issue in Britain (Meghji and Saini, 2017). Again, attention has to be paid to such intersectional issues in order to critically analyse what are extremely complex justice issues. Racial discrimination which denies young black and minority ethnic young people opportunities in the labour market is a clear example of misrecognition and maldistribution intersecting, limiting the opportunity of these young people to achieve parity in the economic sphere.

### **3.3.4 The personal effects of individualisation**

Importantly, maldistribution and misrecognition can combine to have an extremely negative impact upon the individual, imbuing self-feelings of embarrassment, humiliation and shame (May, 2016). The literature suggests that young people may be suffering some of these effects. For example, Standing (2014) writes that those in the precariat suffer from the ‘four As:’ anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation, frustrated that despite their efforts to secure stable and rewarding employment, they are instead consigned to relative deprivation whilst being carpet-bombed with celebrity culture and the trappings of success.

De Cuyper et al (2008) report that for those who lack the necessary 'employability' skills to remain competitive in the labour market, individuals reported increased levels of distress, depression and anxiety. Other academics have noted the detrimental impact of life in the precariat on young people's mental health (Wyn and Andres, 2011, Furlong et al, 2011; Cuervo et al, 2013; Woodman and Wyn, 2015). Butterworth et al (2011) report that those with low job control and low job security are more likely to report feelings of hopelessness and helplessness and as a result, more likely to suffer mental health problems. This is corroborated by Simmons and Thompson (2011) who suggest that the emotional consequences of life in the precariat include feelings of rejection and shame as well as further consequences such as 'a greater likelihood of drug dependency or criminal activity' (p89). Worse still, periods of unemployment early on in labour market careers can have additional scarring effects to those redistributive consequences discussed earlier, in terms of future happiness, job satisfaction and reduced health outcomes (Bell and Blanchflower, 2009; MacDonald, 2009; Scarpetta et al, 2010).

One of the factors said to play a part in this is a feeling of 'ontological insecurity' that can impact upon young people today. Giddens (1991) argues that processes of late-modernity have eroded the structural bases that underpinned trust and stability in society. There are links here with the concept of bounded agency discussed previously. On the one hand young people are encouraged by government and societies to aspire towards the traditional markers of successful adulthood – a university degree, good job, a comfortable home and a family of one's own. However, structural conditions can frustrate young people, particularly those disadvantaged, from achieving these goals (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2015). This is affecting young people across the globe with terms such as 'delayed transitions' or 'frozen transitions' being coined in the Global North and 'Waithood' in the Global South (Kuhar and Reiter, 2012; Woodman, 2013; van der Vlies, 2017). As Silva (2012) notes, young people still pursue these markers despite their growing ambiguity, 'trapped between the rigidity of the past and the flexibility of the present' (p518). Many authors suggest that unemployment, ontological insecurity and the loss of control it can create can have particularly damaging consequences in terms of stress, anxiety, depression and suicide for young people (Leccardi, 2008: 2014; O'Dea et al, 2014; Power et al, 2015). Di Blasi et al (2016) for example noted in their

study on Italian youth that added to these feelings, 'participants clearly experienced disengagement from community participation manifested in feelings of isolation, lack of interest, and distrust' (p290). And again, the impact is cross-cut along lines of gender, class, race and disability amongst other factors (Threadgold and Nilan, 2009; Allen, 2014). This is very much evidenced in the study by Hoskins (2017) who draws this neatly together when she writes:

The current education and employment context in the global north is one of insecurity and greater indebtedness. This insecure social context raises social justice questions about which young people can draw on familial and educational resources to ensure their own opportunity is maximised, in a world of shrinking access, opportunities and possibilities. (p44)

The impact of insecurity is also said to inhibit the ability of young people to plan for the future, such is the uncertainty of the present (Brannen and Nilsen, 2007; Devadason, 2008; Carabelli and Lyon, 2016). This is an important issue in relation to the Scottish policy context which places a great emphasis on arming young people with the necessary tools to successfully navigate the choppy waters of the modern labour market (Scottish Government, 2012a; 2014; 2018a).

### **3.3.5 Stigma**

The final issue of misrecognition to be covered here is that of stigma. As Fraser (1997a) has long noted, those in receipt of social security have been looked down upon; 'public assistance programs 'target' the poor, not only for aid but for hostility' (p25). Goffman (1963) describes stigma as 'a phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute which is deeply discredited by his/her society is rejected as a result of the attribute. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity' (p3). The UK at the moment is witnessing a 'perfect storm' of stigma as pejorative images and denigrating discourse from TV shows, news media and public and political rhetoric swirl around mainstream culture (Pemberton et al, 2016). This is said to be serving to 'other' and dehumanise those that do access social security (Patrick, 2016; Irwin, 2016). The hardening of attitudes in the UK since the 1980s towards those in poverty and those in receipt of social security is well documented (Garthwaite, 2016; O'Hagan, 2016). Jensen (2014) points to the explosion of interest in what she terms 'poverty porn' in the UK since 2013 with a whole host of TV shows creating this new

'genre'. This discourse has also been stoked of late by Conservative politicians as well as right-wing media:

Successive governments have carried out their welfare reform policies in close association with dominant right-wing media. Newspapers such as the *Sun* and *Daily Mail*, and their online platforms, have been cheerleaders for welfare reform; headlining benefit fraud, attacking welfare claimants and acting as a mouthpiece for ministers like Iain Duncan Smith, supporting benefit cuts and caps uncritically. (Beresford, 2016: 422)

The demonisation of those in poverty and in receipt of social security is argued to have been a feature of political rhetoric since, at the very least, the 1980s, but McKay and Rowlingson (2011) suggest that since the coalition we have witnessed 'continuation with intensification' and a rise in 'othering' rhetoric. As Patrick (2014) notes, 'in seeking to justify and defend a tightening of welfare conditionality and a reduction in the real value of many benefits, the Government has repeatedly returned to the idea of benefits as a lifestyle choice' (p709). In particular, the discourse of 'shirkers and scroungers' and 'strivers Vs skivers' has become a favourite trope of Conservative politicians and a reworking of the older 'deserving Vs undeserving' rhetoric of days gone by (Bailey, 2016). Others argue that it has been a practice for many years to position those in poverty and/or in receipt of social security as 'undeserving' (Patrick, 2011; McDowell et al, 2014; Edmiston, 2016).

Research shows that this dynamic can have particular consequences for disabled people who particularly rely on social security to participate in everyday life (Reeves and Loopstra, 2017; McNeill et al, 2017). The increased conditionality of the welfare system has been criticised for failing to take into account the specific requirements of disabled people in the UK (Baumberg, 2017). This misrecognition of disabled people's particular needs is fuelled by a popular discourse which views them 'through a deserving/undeserving lens whereby moral judgements are fluid and binary, and articles relating to fraudulent claims are disproportionately high when compared to the fraud rate' (McEnhill and Byrne, 2014: 106). The scrounger/skiver narrative is argued to have resulted in all disabled social security claimants being viewed with increasing suspicion (Runswick-Cole and Goodley, 2015).

Stigmatisation of welfare recipients is also having added consequences for young people. Firstly, it has led many young people to not apply for social security that they



are entitled to (Shildrick et al, 2012d; MacInnes et al, 2015). This is a clear example of misrecognition and maldistribution overlapping. Patrick (2016) makes the important point that the process of accessing social security:

...primarily serves to further entrench the exclusion of out-of-work benefit claimants, through treatment and practices that leave individuals feeling stigmatised, shamed and stereotyped as second-class citizens. (p250)

Secondly, there is evidence that the stigmatisation of those in poverty and recipients of social security works to exclude individuals from participation in community life as feelings of shame impinge on individuals' sense of identity (Garthwaite, 2016; Baumberg, 2016; Pemberton et al, 2016). This is a point Fraser (2015) emphasises, that status injuries such as stigmatisation can impinge on individuals' sense of citizenship. These issues are argued to be impacting on all recipients of welfare. I investigate the issue of stigma on young people in this study as it appears a crucial issue of justice and one highlighted by Fraser. I now turn to the final sphere of justice – representation and the political domain.

### **3.4 Representation**

To restate, Fraser (2005b; 2008b) added this final domain of justice in later writing. Fraser (2015) argues that at present there exists a political 'legitimation crisis' and that this is rooted within the neo-liberal structure of society, beset as it is with contradictions:

On the one hand, legitimate, efficacious public power is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other hand, capitalism's drive to endless accumulation tends to destabilize the very public power on which it relies. (p159)

Fraser puts forward a variety of arguments for why this is the case, but the most important one for young people is this: she argues that the accumulation of capital relies on public powers to enforce the constitutive norms which allow it to take place. However, these powers are destabilised by the relentless pursuit of this accumulation as precarity spreads, inequality grows, the planet continues to warm and larger swathes of public life are privatised. As more and more people are threatened by the political conditions which allow capital accumulation to take place, the potential to question the legitimacy of these conditions becomes greater.

Fraser (2005b) argues that these processes are impacted by and contribute to three different levels of misrepresentation:

1. **Ordinary-political** – voting systems which work to deny parity to minorities
2. **Misframing** – boundaries which work to exclude some from political participation altogether
3. **Meta-political misrepresentation** – driven by processes of globalisation, this arises when states and transnational elites deny voice to individuals and groups.

It is possible to identify indicators of all three in the literature pertaining to young people and their political participation.

### **3.4.1 Young people and political participation**

The 2014 Independence Referendum in Scotland witnessed a resurgence in political activity amongst young people. As Hopkins (2015) notes, young people ‘were deeply involved in, and engaged by, the whole process. Many were active in local campaigning, regularly participating in debates about the Referendum’ (p92). A post-referendum report by the Electoral Commission (2014) reported that 75% of seventeen and eighteen year olds utilised their vote, as did 54% of eighteen to twenty-four year-olds. These figures are relatively high, as from 2001 inclusive of 2015, the UK witnessed a trend of less than 50% of young people turning out to vote (Henn and Foard, 2012). The EU referendum in 2016 and the General Election of 2017 also saw a significant increase in youth turnout in comparison to the decade of elections preceding them, with 66% and 61% of 18-24 year-olds voting in each, respectively (Curtice and Simpson, 2018). Despite the recent rise in young people voting, indicators suggest that turnout is still significantly higher amongst older voters, those living in better-off suburban areas and amongst graduates and young people in higher education (YouGov, 2017). This suggests that socio-economic factors are playing a significant role in turnout. An interesting development of the 2017 General Election was ‘the generational differences in support for the two main parties were...the largest on record. Two thirds of 18–24 year olds voted for the Labour Party compared to just one third in 2010’ (Sloam and Henn, 2019: 2). Sloam and Henn (*Ibid*) argue that this switch to the Left is due to the effects of austerity which have disproportionately been borne by young people, a claim supported by other studies (Birch et al, 2013; Henn and Foard, 2014).

### 3.4.2 Disengaged...or disempowered?

Despite the recent increase, research points to a consistent trend of young people in the UK disengaging from the formal political sphere since the 1980s (Phelps, 2012). The fact that young people were not turning out to vote and that youth turnout was consistently below 50% in UK parliamentary and other elections led to concern about a growing 'democratic deficit' (Farthing, 2010; Wood, 2010; Kisby and Sloam, 2014). Many writers note that individual deficit was claimed to be the key problem, with the apathy and selfishness of youth being cited as reasons for their disengagement (Pirie and Worcester, 2000; Wood 2010; Rheingans and Hollands, 2013; Henn and Foard, 2014). However, research suggests that the reason young people were not voting and participating in formal politics is that they felt alienated from 'formal' politics (Henn et al, 2002; Marsh et al, 2007; Dermody et al. 2010; Phelps, 2012; Henn and Foard, 2014, Hopkins and Todd, 2015). Studies have also shown that young people are cynical about formal politics, disenchanted about conventional political activity and disempowered rather than apathetic (Cooper, 2012; Coffey and Farrugia, 2014; Côté, 2014a; Amnå and Ekman, 2014).

However, it is an established trend now that young people *are* engaged politically, but that much of their engagement falls outside the 'formal' political realm (Henn et al, 2005; Manning, 2013; McDowell et al, 2014; Soler-i-Martí, 2015). Young people are engaging in activities such as protesting, demonstrations, boycotts, petitioning and a host of new forms of participation aided by online media in order to register political views (Ødegård & Berglund, 2008; Munn, 2012). Many writers argue that these forms of political engagement are connected to the individualisation of our neo-liberal times, with young people positioned as political 'consumers' (Stolle et al, 2005; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Harris et al, 2010; Manning, 2013). Rather, political engagement may be a way of young people expressing their identity and represent a shift from the collective politics of the past. This has been disputed however, as since the economic recession there has been an upsurge in political activity by young people around the globe with many of these new social movements creating intentionally dialogical spaces (Rheingans and Hollands, 2013; Antentas, 2015; Hopkins and Todd, 2015). Young people's active role was pivotal in the *aganaktismenoi* in Greece, the *indignados* in Spain, the Occupy Movement that began in New York and the Arab Spring that witnessed

revolution and conflict across North Africa and the Middle East. (Reimer, 2012; Taibo, 2012; Ahmed Ali and Macharia, 2013; Antentas, 2016; Kyriakidou and Osuna, 2017).

However, it appears that some young people may be more inclined to participate in the representational sphere than others. Many researchers point to complex interplay between groups in terms of political participation. For example, some research suggests young women are more inclined to participate (Lopes et al, 2009; Gaby, 2017) whilst others suggest that young women participate less, feeling less invited, less entitled to a voice and face gender specific barriers to participation (particularly young mothers, for example) (Levac, 2013; Mycock and Tonge, 2014; Briggs, 2017). Research also suggests that young people from minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK are participating politically (Heath et al, 2011), albeit motivations may be different as 'religious identities emerge alongside ethnic identities as bases for mobilization and in response to racialized representations and exclusions' (O'Toole and Gale, 2010: 141). Young people with additional support needs also face particular barriers in relation to having their political views heard (Beresford, 2004; Franklin and Sloper, 2009).

Disengagement with political participation in formal politics is most pronounced amongst young people with lower levels of education and working-class youth (Bastedo, 2015; Heath, 2016; Sloam and Henn, 2019). Research suggests that these young people are not ignorant of the political domain but feel that politicians are detached from their lived reality and so feel participation is pointless (O'Toole et al, 2003; Dermody et al, 2010; Holmes and Manning, 2013; Bastedo, 2015; France and Threadgold, 2016). Smyth et al (2014) also make the point in their research that 'these young people appear to have been marginalised and disengaged in large part due to the macro-level global impact of neoliberalism' (p493). A combination of economic and political marginalisation is said to have contributed to these young people disengaging from the formal political sphere. This is also said to have played a part in fuelling a rise in anti-immigrant, populist and far-right activity and rhetoric in the UK and abroad amongst young people (Cifuentes et al, 2013; Mieriņa and Koroļeva, 2015). As Nayak (2009) potently notes:

There can be little doubt that white working-class youth subcultures may on occasion be deemed beyond the pale, but it is minority ethnic youth who continue to exist in the shadows of the English imagination as the ultimate

repository of fear. In the shaky and indeterminate post-9/11 landscape it is they who are displaced within an 'axis of evil' that casts them as the dark Anarchists. (p35)

Writers argue that a combination of factors – post 9/11 fear, politically stoked anti-immigration rhetoric, global terrorism and economic marginalisation amongst others are creating an environment for such beliefs to be cultivated in young (white) people (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2015; Deuchar and Bhopal, 2017). Stahl (2017) cautions however that it is important not to pathologize young working-class white men as an 'angry mob' – and that researchers must be sensitive when trying to understand how they make sense of their lives. And this is true of all young people, as Henn and Foard (2014) note, their 'engagement with formal politics is complex and nuanced; although there is a tendency in much research to treat young people as a homogenised group there is no single uniform pattern, and this generation is diverse in its political orientation' (p373). All these examples point to a complex intersectional interplay cross-cut by issues of maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation that require careful scrutiny in order to unpick sites of injustice.

Social inequalities also play a part in the *efficacy* that young people feel they possess in the political domain (Beaumont, 2010). Political efficacy is said to have two dimensions – the internal and the external. Internal efficacy relates to an individual's sense of competence in the political sphere – their self-perception of political capacity, their subjective sense of understanding of politics and feeling of competence to engage (Norris, 2009). External efficacy relates to an individual's perception of the responsiveness of the political system to their needs and demands. Valentino et al (2009) argue that 'a citizen is more likely to participate when she believes her actions can make a difference in politics...or because she is confident that the system is responsive to her and others like her' (p308). Kahne and Westheimer (2006) dispute this, however, arguing that 'internal political efficacy has generally been found to have a positive relationship to political activity...measures of external efficacy, on the other hand, have not exhibited a consistent relationship to activity' (p292). They point to research which suggests that African American citizens in the US participated in large numbers despite feeling the government was not responsive to their needs, though they did have high levels of personal competence in the political sphere. However, it must be

borne in mind that levels of efficacy are linked to social inequalities as Schugurensky (2000) notes that:

...those with high political capital are likely to have also high levels of other forms of capital (economic, social and cultural). In this regard, the discussion on the unequal distribution of political capital must be put into the context of broader structures of domination and interlocking oppressions, and cannot ignore the role that class, gender, race and other inequalities play in the acquisition and activation of political capital. (p10)

Norris (2009) also draws attention to the importance of education in the development of efficacy. She argues that having the information, awareness and competence to make sense of the political issues in their life is a significant predictor of an individual's engagement in the political sphere. Schugurensky (2000) contends however, that education alone cannot equalize the economic and social inequalities which are strong predictors of political participation.

Returning to the point regarding economic marginalisation, research points to the notion that young people require to feel that they have an investment in society in order to feel motivated to participate as citizens (France, 1998; Benedicto and Morán, 2007; Sloam, 2012a). For those without an economic stake in society, excluded from the processes of production and consumption, it is perhaps unsurprising that they are said to feel detached from the political process (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Studies show that young people associate economic independence with autonomy and an increased sense of (and duty towards) citizenship (France, 1998; Smith et al, 2005; Benedicto and Morán, 2007). This suggests a link between the domains of distribution and representation, with young people's economic marginalisation playing a significant role in undermining their ability and inclination to participate in the political domain.

This dynamic is said to be contributing to a vicious circle whereby young people are not voting and is put forward as part of the reason for young people particularly suffering in terms of changes to social policy in the UK of late (Worrall, 2015; Crisp and Powell, 2017). Sloam (2012b) summarises this predicament well;

If young people do not vote, politicians are less likely to take their interests seriously, so that young people are likely to become the victims rather than the benefactors of public policy. This is particularly true in a time of financial austerity...as young people continue to feel that they are powerless and have

little say in what the government does, and increasingly believe that they are not being treated fairly by government. (p6)

This is a stark example of maldistribution and misrepresentation working in tandem. As young people do not vote so their interests are not protected and the more they feel disenchanted and disengaged from those in power and are then, in turn, less likely to vote. And with young people's non-participation being blamed on their apathy rather than their disenchantment and disempowerment, we can see a connection between the spheres of misrecognition and misrepresentation.

### **3.4.3 The public sphere**

There is also some evidence of meta-political misrepresentation in the literature and this is put forward as another reason for young people's disengagement from the formal political domain. Harris et al (2007) argue, as:

...nation-states experience a loss of control over matters significant to their citizens, and politicians are not perceived as effective players in a world where social and political issues are debated and determined at a global level ...as young people no longer believe that politicians have the capacity to solve issues that impact on their lives (such as global warming), they come to feel that their interests are unable to be represented through formal political processes. (p21-22)

Fraser (2014a; 2016a) makes the point that increasingly, decisions that impact on all our lives are made at a supra-national level by organisations such the World Bank, NATO, the OECD and the IMF amongst others. As a consequence, writers argue that many young people see their elected representatives as unable (or unwilling) to intervene in globalised issues that affect and impact upon their lives (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002, 2009; Mills et al, 2006; Harris et al, 2007). Alongside the decline in influence of the public institutions that drew people together this is argued to be having a particularly deleterious effect on the ability (and willingness) of young people to interject in the public sphere.

And this is important, as research suggests that is impossible to fully understand young people's participation in public life without looking at the influence of the communities and neighbourhoods within which they reside (Hopkins, 2010; Dillabough et al, 2014). Participation in society moves beyond the explicitly political domain to take in wider involvement in the public sphere – and this in turn feeds into young people's ability to

have a voice. Fraser (2014b) stresses the importance of the public sphere as essential to the development of an inclusive democracy through which people can meet, interact and deliberate. For urban youth like those residing in Porttown, many authors have noted the growing influence of 'private space' and wider processes of gentrification. Many writers note that these are creating new inequalities within metropolitan centres – with negative impacts such as displacement, loss of affordable housing, the privatisation of public space and increases in living costs (Anon, 2009; Kennelly and Watt, 2012; Farrugia, 2014). The result of these processes can mean a loss of social cohesion as well as the exclusion of young people from these spaces, reducing their ability to participate fully in their local spaces (Shildrick et al, 2009; Dillabough et al, 2014). Added to this, young people can find local space exclusionary as they become perceived as a threatening presence on the street (Malone, 2002; Evans, 2008). Threadgold (2012) notes that this is part of – and a continuation of – a discourse which can position young people as a threat to the fabric of society; 'this sense of political powerlessness seems likely to continue whilst...they are treated as scapegoats and blamed for all manner of things in the omnipresent media moral panics about them, and they are constantly talked about rather than to or with' (p31). Here we can detect a connection between the representational and recognitional sphere. If young people are seen as 'threats' to the social order so their claims for participation can be more readily ignored.

Of course place can also have a beneficial impact upon young people's participation and much research highlights the positive influence of recreational facilities, community centres as well as family and social networks that offer invaluable economic and social support (Hill et al, 2007; Cuervo and Wyn, 2014; Visser et al, 2015). Stahl and Habib (2017) suggest the influence of place and space on young people's participation can be contradictory and ambivalent. As they and others have found, particularly for marginalised youth, locality can be both a source of invaluable support and provide a genuine sense of belonging, but at the same time can be inadequate in many ways, as localities can provide the spatial backdrop to economic and social disadvantage (Anon<sup>5</sup>, 2009; Dillabough et al, 2015; Kintrea et al, 2015; Evans, 2016). And it is important to note the influence of factors such as race, gender, sexuality and disability amongst others on the interaction between young people and the spaces they inhabit (Mathers,



2008; Clarke et al, 2011; Mohammad, 2013; Brown, 2014; Spain, 2014; Beebeejaun, 2017). Ultimately, as Gieryn (2000) notes, places have the potential to encourage engagement or estrangement and the contemporary urban environment is ultimately a site of struggle over these processes and there is little doubt that the influence of neo-liberalism has changed – and is changing – the spaces and places that urban youth inhabit. As Giroux (2003) argues:

...under the reign of neoliberalism, citizens lose their public voice as market liberties replace civic freedoms...as corporate culture extends even deeper into the basic institutions of civil and political society, there is a simultaneous diminishing of non-commodified public spheres – those institutions such as public schools, churches, non-commercial public broadcasting, libraries, trade unions and various voluntary institutions engaged in dialogue, education, and learning – that address the relationship of the self to public life and social responsibility to the broader demands of citizenship as well as provide a robust vehicle for public participation and democratic citizenship. (174)

A final important connection to make with the redistributive sphere is that the restricted labour market is also said to be a significant factor in limiting the economic and social resources available to marginalised youth, as well as their inclination to vote (Taylor, Borlagdan, and Allan, 2012). Di Blasi et al (2016) in their study of young people in Italy perhaps put this most starkly when they write:

...a not surprising finding in the present study was the participants' clear disengagement from civic and community involvement. None showed interest in collective actions, political involvement, and government and social affairs. Moreover, it is notable that they felt themselves to be outsiders, appearing consciously out of touch with community and institutions...we must be worried about the consequences of this finding on the civic values and behaviours of young people now and in the future. At last, it is surprising that participants expressed resignation and distrust rather than protesting...the lack of opportunities has been draining energies that might have been used to react more effectively. (p1054)

Research in the UK has produced similar findings; the transitional breakdown occurring for young people today is undermining the willingness of young people to participate in democratic life (Sloam, 2012; Henn and Foard, 2012). For the future of our democracy, these are troubling developments and it is interesting to note the parallels between the literature highlighted here and the participation of the young people in this study, detailed in chapter 6.

### 3.5 Conclusion: Young people and social justice – identifying the research gap

To try and bring all these different threads together is challenging, for sure. Importantly, the research suggests that for a large number of young people the political domain appears irrelevant and a large portion of their participation is increasingly falling outside the formal domain. If we stretch Fraser's (2008b) conceptualisation of *misframing*, there is a robust argument to be made for the exclusion of young people in the political sphere to fall into this category. In the current context with young people's justice claims being seemingly ignored this appears to be creating a vicious circle of exclusion as their misrecognition and maldistribution compounds their exclusion from the political domain. An argument can be made that this is constructing a 'boundary', impeding their political participation. Fraser makes the point that this process is being compounded by *meta-political misrepresentation* as supra-national organisations that have considerable global and political influence operate beyond the democratic structures of state level. If it is the case that young people see their politicians as increasingly irrelevant in intervening in these globalised forces which are acting upon their lives then this argument could be strengthened.

The problem for young people, however, in terms of what the literature is telling us is that as young people are seemingly turning to the informal political domain to exercise their voice, it is unclear what level of impact they can have. As Fraser (2011) herself notes the power of states to intervene in local and global issues is not over yet and it is too early to abandon national politics; 'social justice movements need to participate simultaneously in both types of arenas, subaltern and official. It is not an either/or choice' (p79). Without intervention in the formal political sphere where decision-making occurs, certainly in terms of national social policy, it remains to be seen how inclined those in power will be to heed young people's claims – and young people will continue to be seen as an 'easy target' for spending cuts (Crisp and Powell, 2017).

However, for the most part, it seems young people's political exclusion falls primarily into the category of *ordinary-political misrepresentation* as Fraser (2005b) terms it, whereby age-based maldistribution and misrecognition appear to deny parity of political participation to young people. And some young people more than others. Young people's exclusion from the labour market is said to impact on their ability and

willingness to participate in society. And the misrecognition of political apathy and disinterest which is laid at their door fails to appreciate the different ways in which young people are said to be participating politically and perpetuates the misdiagnosis of the reasons for their disengagement. Perhaps it would be better to label their non-participation as a form of disempowerment given the evidence from the literature.

This is compounded by the influence of the individualisation of our society as discussed in the section on recognition. The breakdown of the societal institutions that shaped the life path of young people is not only said to fragment the life course for young people but also diminishes their capacity for building solidarity with others in like positions - as well as participation in public life more generally (Corbett and Walker, 2013; MacLeod and Emejulu, 2015; McDaniel, 2017). Here we can see an explicit connection between the recognitional and representational spheres as young people are expected to make the same community connections and participate in politics as did generations past, but perhaps this is an impossible expectation given the growing individualisation of our society (Henn et al, 2005)?

In terms of redistribution, for young marginalised people the changing dynamics impacting on the school-to-work transition appear to be having a profound impact upon their ability to successfully achieve participatory parity with their better-off peers. The growth and influence of credentialism gives those young people able to succeed in education a considerable head-start in the attainment of the diminishing numbers of high quality jobs (Smith, 2009; Simmons and Thompson, 2011). Côté (2014a), arguing from a political-economy perspective, makes the argument that the *economic marginalisation* of youth to the fringes of the labour market and to the churn can amount to little more than *exploitation*, forced to engage in poor work and/or employability programmes and placements with little in the way of financial reward. Côté (2014b) also makes the point that this marginalisation and exploitation is imposed on young people and is creating conditions that are leading to 'arrested adulthood.' This is working to extend the youth 'transition,' with progression to the traditional markers of adulthood out of reach for many.

And this again is an important point. As Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) note, 'youth' has always been a notoriously 'fuzzy phase' to determine, but arguably never more so than now. Du Bois-Reymond (2009) makes the argument that:

Age, once a strong marker, is no longer a trustworthy indicator. The traditional life course stages of childhood, youth and adulthood have lost their former clear meanings and have become blurred. Children behave in many respects like young autonomous persons, certainly concerning their consumptive behaviour. While childhood ends earlier, the youth phase is prolonged; it begins earlier and might stretch well into the third life decade – adulthood arrested. (32)

The denial of an adequate material standard of living to young people based on age is becoming increasingly difficult to justify as the youth 'phase' becomes ever more indeterminate (Hodkinson, 2011; Roberts, 2011; Pascual and Martin, 2017). And this is the crux of the matter in terms of *non-recognition* (Fraser, 1997a), the continued adherence to the belief that youth is just a phase (and an immature one) that they will inevitably step out from. As such, young people's justice claims can be ignored as can their claims to an adequate material standard of living (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2011). For many young people it appears that their relegation to the fringes of the labour market and the erosion of their rights to social security can leave them in poverty and *deprivation* (MacDonald, 2009; Stephens and Blenkinsopp, 2015). And this has been worsened of late with the hardening of attitudes to those in poverty, recast as it is as individualised moral deficiency, rather than as a result of structural failures (Lavery, 2017). In terms of Fraser's (1995b) model, this interacts with the domain of recognition, also appearing to amount to a form of *non-recognition*; 'being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's culture' (p71).

With regard to a seemingly misplaced individualised focus on issues such as aspiration and an erasure of structural impediments which deny young people due recognition of their difficult circumstances, class-based choices or upon issues of discrimination – the focus on aspiration or the ability to construct the 'correct' choice biography also appears as a form of *cultural domination* (Fraser. 1996). The experiences, goals and lifestyle choices of young people who fall outside the prescribed transitions are deemed inadequate or inappropriate in comparison to those constructing what are deemed the 'correct' biographies. For young people constructing different choice biographies along

alternative lines (such as class, culture or due to alternative social structural factors) it appears that this misrecognition is working to impede their participatory parity. And this is compounded by political and media discourse portraying young people on the labour market periphery as scroungers or skivers, despite the remarkable agency they are displaying in attempting to better their situations. And we can begin to see the interaction between the redistributive and recognitional spheres as the labelling of young people as deficit can limit their willingness to access social security. These 'affirmative' redistributive measures have been well critiqued by Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) who argues that to claim social security 'is to mark the disadvantaged as inherently deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more' (p77). Young people appear to be unable to challenge these forms of *disrespect* given their near exclusion from the political domain.

The findings of my study present a complex picture of young people and social justice. For young people on the margins Fraser points to the three spheres working in unison to cement injustice. Her framework was therefore essential as a tool to investigate and analyse this phenomenon. This chapter confirmed that a great deal of research has been conducted looking at a wide variety of issues facing young people in the UK connected to social injustice. However, the systematic application of a theory of social justice, to an investigation of the experiences of young people, is a necessary, original and valuable contribution to knowledge embedded within this rich literature base.

Fraser (*Ibid*) makes the point that 'individuals are nodes of convergence for multiple, cross-cutting axes of subordination' (p57). As such, the contention here is that an interpretive approach to the investigation is best placed to draw out these nodes of convergence. A qualitative approach is best placed to explore the complexity of human experience (Cohen et al, 2007; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Hammersley 2013) and the complex web of injustice impacting on young people in the contemporary context. Fraser's (Fraser and Naples, 2004) framework seeks to explicate issues of social justice rooted in the social structures and the institutional framework circumventing the lives of young people. As Ochberg (1996) notes, the interpretive paradigm is well positioned to do so as it is best suited to revealing the connections between individual lives and social practices. Denzin (1989) builds on this, arguing that researchers:

...must learn how to connect and join biographically meaningful experiences to society-at-hand and to the larger culture- and meaning-making institutions of the late postmodern period. The meanings of these experiences are best given by the persons who experience them. (p26)

With this in mind, the research methodology for investigation of the young people's experiences of social injustice was designed. Further justification of the approach is outlined in chapter 5 when I describe the design and implementation of the research methodology and methods used.

Given the complexity of social injustice affecting young people in the contemporary context, the challenges facing practitioners working with them appears daunting if addressing these issues is a core element of their practice. The literature suggests that this is not a choice, as doing so is an *ethical* requirement of youth work practice (Tyler et al, 2009; Sercombe, 2010; Stanton, 2015). It is to the practitioners that I now turn.



## **Chapter 4 - Youth Work: The challenges of practice**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The last chapter revealed a complex and multi-layered picture of social justice facing young people today, particularly for those on the margins of society. This is an important point, as it is these young people that practitioners primarily engage with (Davies, 2013; Ritchie and Ord, 2016; Petkovic and Zentner, 2017). Although youth work remains a universal service, practitioners primarily work with young people identified as requiring additional support of some kind (Spence et al, 2006; Davies and Merton, 2009). In this way, youth work is fundamentally a practice aimed towards combating social injustice in the lives of the young people accessing the service (Buchroth, 2010; Beck and Purcell, 2010; Bright, 2015). For example, Sercombe (2010) argues that youth work today:

...requires attention not only to young people's personal development and their relationships with each other and within their immediate communities, but also to the social structures that produce systems of inequality, exclusion, poverty and deprivation in the neighbourhoods within which youth services are often placed. (p153)

Banks (2010) agrees, arguing that a key ethical standard for practitioners working with young people is combating social injustice in the lives of those they work with.

However, youth work stems from a variety of traditions, often in tension with one another. Historically, its purpose was seen as re-engaging marginalised youth back into 'decent' society, not challenging the structures which led to their exclusion in the first place (Mayo, 2008; Van de Walle et al, 2011). This tension still exists for practitioners and has ramifications in terms of social justice and these will be explored in this chapter.

In the last chapter, the effects of neo-liberalism were shown to be having a significant influence on the lives of young people growing up in Scotland and the UK today. This is also the case for the professional sector of youth work as it is argued to be influencing the ability of practitioners to respond to issues of social justice experienced by young people. For many writers this influence alters the practitioner-young person relationship to such an extent that the practice can no longer be termed 'youth work'



(Jeffs and Smith, 1999; Ord, 2009; Jones, 2014). As a result and as stated in the introduction this has prompted me to adopt the term 'practitioner working with young people' being used throughout this thesis.

What follows in this chapter is a review of literature pertaining to youth work and its relationship to issues of social justice. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve into the historical antecedents of youth work or how the practice has developed. The aim of this chapter is to provide a very brief outline of how the practice is defined today, identify the core features of the sector and the potential implications of this in terms of social justice, relating to the framework of Nancy Fraser. In this way, I hope to set the scene for chapter 7 when I present and discuss the interviews with the practitioners. To begin, I will outline the definitive features that practitioners working with young people in Scotland are expected to adhere to in their practice.

#### **4.2 The 'definitive features' of youth work in Scotland**

Importantly for the practitioners in this study, the *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work* (YouthLink Scotland, 2005) advocates that the practice of youth work has three essential and definitive features<sup>10</sup> which it describes as:

- 1) That young people choose to participate
- 2) The work must build from where people are
- 3) Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

These principles are also argued in the youth work literature to be critical in terms of enabling practitioners working with young people to intercede in addressing issues of social injustice in their lives. I will address each in turn.

The first feature, that young people choose to participate, or 'the voluntary principle,' is the subject of continuous debate in the youth work literature (Coburn, 2011; Batsleer, 2013b; Davies, 2015). What is said to distinguish youth work from other welfare services is that young people can choose (or not) to participate in any youth work activity (Coussée, 2009; Devlin, 2010; Jeffs, 2017). That young people can access youth

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<sup>10</sup> These three features have subsequently been endorsed in the latest *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-2019* (Scottish Government, 2014a)

work of their own volition makes the practice unique in this regard (Ord, 2009). It is through this principle that young people are able to exercise a degree of power in the young person-adult interaction, a rare commodity for young people in their relationships with adults in their lives (Mason, 2015; Fyfe et al, 2018). Davis (2009) argues that this unique facet of the work is what underpins youth workers' ability to build relationships with young people, as practitioners are compelled to take young people and their concerns seriously in order to encourage engagement.

The above leads to the second feature and perhaps the most important in terms of interceding in processes of injustice. Informal education<sup>11</sup> is distinguished from other forms of educational practice by its commitment to 'starting where young people are at', rather than from pre-determined learning outcomes (Wood et al, 2015). By rooting the educational endeavour in the lives and experiences of the participants, they are sharing power by ensuring the participants are influencing the educational work that takes place. As such, practitioners show that they 'take their forms of cultural expression seriously' (McGregor, 2015: 71). Connected to this notion is acknowledgement that the focus of the work should be on the 'here-and-now,' not on work that will benefit the young people in an imagined and projected future (Coussée, 2016). Davies (2005) describes this as working 'with' young people on their 'in-the-present' priorities. This is contrasted with other work which may see youth as a stage to be passed through, where practitioners work 'on' young people towards a destination as preferred by policy priorities (Siurala et al, 2016). Spence (2007) captures this feature of the practice best when she writes:

'Starting where young people are at' ...creates the conditions in which some young people will voluntarily and actively engage with a youth project...and through them learn to actively participate in wider social issues. This process of intervention involves understanding the socio-economic, institutional and cultural context of young people's lives in a general sense whilst simultaneously having the capacity to respond sensitively to the differences between individuals and groups on an inter-personal level. The primary skill which is used...is that of listening. Because youth workers listen in an informed but open way...conversation and dialogue can emerge. (p13)

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<sup>11</sup> Informal education is defined as being rooted in 'dialogue and conversation, working with the issues that people bring from their everyday lives. Much of this form of education is outside mainstream or traditional educational settings...youth workers enter into a voluntary relationship, facilitating or setting the scene for learning that involves all participants on an equal basis' (Buchroth, 2010: 62-3).

The primary point here for practitioners is that only by engaging with their experiences in the 'here-and-now' can they expect to understand the lives of the young people and begin to address injustices impinging on their lives.

The third feature, that practitioners and young people are partners in any learning activities is often referred to in the literature as the youth work *process* (Ord, 2004; 2009; McKee, 2011; McGregor, 2015). At the heart of the practice is relationship and dialogue and it these combined that shape the interaction between young person and practitioner and drive any learning that takes place. De St Croix (2016) argues that 'putting relationships first is not merely a rhetorical aspiration; it involves creating spaces where young people feel welcome and included, and making time for them' (p76). Indeed research suggests that young people value this aspect of the work that practitioners do above all else (Coburn, 2011; Miller et al, 2015). Jeffs and Smith (2008) argue that practitioners must be friendly, accessible and approachable and act with integrity. Spence (2004) contends that it is absolutely key that the relationship is negotiated and involves an attempt to share power with the young participants, 'constructed within a value base that stresses justice and equality' (p264).

Bringing all three features together, it is possible to see their importance in terms of social justice. In order for the young people to want to participate, and discuss potential issues of injustice, then it is necessary that; they are listened to; their issues are taken seriously; they have a degree of power in the relationship; any work that takes place has direct reference to their lives, and; is of interest to them. I now turn attention to the literature on youth work in order to analyse how these three features are being realised in the contemporary context and to tease out any tensions between these and the policy context practitioners are operating within.

### **4.3 Modern pressures on youth work**

Over the last three decades, the increasing influence of neo-liberalism has led to the principles described above being compromised (Coussée, 2010; Ord, 2014; Mason, 2015; Taylor, 2015). The late 1970s and early 1980s saw market-structures associated with the private sector brought into the public sector in order to promote greater discipline, efficiency and accountability. This included the introduction:

...of actual or quasi-markets through separating purchasers and providers of services, introducing competition, measuring outputs and outcomes rather than inputs, working to targets, and the generation of procedures and regulations to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of employees' (Banks, 2011: 9).

These processes are said to have brought benefits and challenges for practitioners working with young people (Tyler et al, 2009; Bright, 2015). The most significant of these will now be discussed.

#### **4.3.1 Targets and outcomes**

One of the primary changes that neo-liberalism has promoted in youth work is the increasing influence of governance structures of New Public Managerialism (NPM) (Muncie, 2006; Coburn and Wallace, 2011). NPM is the name given to the techniques and management tools that rose to prominence in the UK in the 1980s as the Thatcher government sought to promote 'efficiency' in the public sector. As the state was increasingly viewed as a wasteful behemoth, market-centred reforms were presented as essential to shake up state institutions in order to provide best value for increasingly squeezed taxpayers (Clarke and Newman, 1997). Borrowed from the private sector, NPM was argued to be the best means of 'removing differences between the public and the private sector and shifting the emphasis from process accountability toward a greater accountability in terms of results' (Hood, 1995: 94). The means of achieving this accountability and at the core of NPM is outcome measurement (or the 'performance indicator') (Verbeeten, 2008). Proponents of NPM argue that by quantifying targets and measuring whether or not these are met mean that organisations can be more attentive to achieving objectives and gain greater focus on 'mission'. Allied to this, 'through performance measurement, public organizations can enhance their planning and control over resources, leading to better value for money and improved services for the public' (Agostino and Arnaboldi, 2015: 355).

This has had a profound impact on the youth work sector. Although accountability is to the performance targets set, for example, by central government, NPM is argued to have given local managers more freedom to manage their organisations (Lehal, 2010). One manager is quoted as stating that targets and outcomes give the work focus and, given youth work's past failure to clearly identify what it actually does, the evidence helped to justify the practice (Davies and Merton, 2009). However, other writers argue that far

from giving freedom to managers, the outcomes desired are actually becoming far more narrow and prescriptive (Davies and Merton, 2009; Taylor, 2009; Devlin, 2012; Bright, 2015). Rather than allowing outcomes to be negotiated in dialogue between practitioner and young person, they are instead determined by funding bodies. Wood and Hine (2009) note, for example, that practitioners are increasingly encountering funders 'specifying how their work should be done and introducing a wide range of targets to be met by agencies delivering this work. Practitioners are increasingly required to demonstrate how their work results in accredited learning outcomes for young people' (p2). Many writers argue that as a result, the open-ended nature of youth work intervention has been eroded and practitioners are expected to respond to the demands of whatever policy imperative is in vogue (Davies and Merton, 2009; Cooper, 2012; Dunne et al, 2014). Cooper (2012) suggests that this way of working means practitioners may actually be colluding in perpetuating social injustice, reinforcing the status quo:

...by working to predetermined targets and outcomes, youth workers are abandoning critical youth work practice and, as a consequence, are complicit in stifling opportunities for young people to develop the resilience necessary for overcoming sources of oppression limiting life chances. (p6)

Davies (2015) suggests that youth workers fear the imposition of targets and outcomes are working to undermine its distinctiveness as a practice. The important point to draw out here is that rather than the *process* of the educational encounter taking precedence, the outcome desired by the state becomes the focus of the educational (or learning) encounter (Cooper, 2011; Mason, 2015). This has potential issues in terms of social justice as instead of addressing problems associated with poverty or discrimination which youth work has the potential to address, practitioners can instead end up overlooking these and working towards pre-determined outcomes which can do little to alter underlying processes of exclusion and marginalisation (Spence et al, 2006; Forrest, 2010; Cooper, 2012). This is the 'youth work paradox.' It is for their capacity to build relationships that practitioners are valued for; for example, the Scottish Government's (2014) *National Youth Work Strategy* suggests, 'its uniqueness and value is in the way youth workers engage with young people through building trusting and supportive relationships' (p4). But, rather than allowing practitioners the freedom to develop the sort of relationship that would enable a practice 'starting where young people are at',

they are expected to work with young people towards pre-determined targets and outcomes. And in so doing undermine their ability to foster and nurture trusting and supportive relationships (Davies, 2013; de St. Croix, 2018). As Stanton (2004) notes, working in this way may mean practitioners obtain funding but by doing so they may lose young people, or the capacity to work *with* young people. Added to this, they risk losing sight of the principles that are said to be integral to their *identity* as youth workers. At the very least this contradiction poses a dilemma for practitioners aiming to develop work that seeks to combat issues of injustice. As a result, it is necessary to investigate if the practitioners in this study are encountering this contradiction between policy and practice.

The added focus on outcomes may result in practitioners working in a way that Fraser (2007) would characterise as part of a wider *affirmative* strategy, helping young people, for example, to insert themselves into the labour market, rather than being part of what could potentially be a more transformative educational agenda. Garasia et al (2015) develops this problematic, arguing that targets reduce ‘the ability of youth workers to act as political change agents. It instead forces them, for example, to focus on delivering a set schedule of personal developmental services to individual young people’ (p2). Such a practice potentially contributes to a deeper process of misrecognition. Rather than the focus being trained on structures that perpetuate injustice it is the individual young person that requires ‘adjustment and it appears to be the job of educators to do that adjusting, not merely cognitively but socially and emotionally too’ (Batsleer, 2013b: 288).

Rather than combating injustice, practitioners may in fact be contributing to it by helping to lay the blame of marginalisation at the feet of the young person (Tett, 2006; Smyth et al, 2013). Such a pathological approach to working with young people risks reinforcing their marginalisation and contributing towards further misrecognition (Wood and Hine, 2009). Ordinary-political misrepresentation is also a risk here as workers focus on a narrow set of pre-determined outcomes targeted at problem groups of young people, such as the unemployed (Garasia et al, 2015). Batsleer (2013a) agrees, stating that the short-term nature of funding and a pressure to meet outcomes has resulted in much work being individualised. The focus on targets and outcomes is said to have resulted in agencies feeling compelled to jettison group work, as the alternative

of casework may lend itself better to the meeting of pre-determined targets. The associational element of youth work is compromised limiting the scope of practitioners to develop the type of work that could assist young people to come together and challenge common sites of injustice. Tett and Maclachlan (2008) put this problem for practitioners most starkly when they write:

1:1 contexts by their very nature cannot provide the conditions for such mutual and transformative learning to occur. They do not allow for that collective consciousness-raising that can enable people to talk back to the power that has constructed them as wanting. (p668)

In this way, practitioners are cast as agents of social control, charged with regulating groups of young people seen as problematic or deficient in some way. Such a focus runs counter to the mission of youth work which starts with the *potential* of young people, rather than the *negative* (Wylie, 2008).

The risk of misrecognition is heightened by a targeted focus on 'problem groups' of young people. Whereas in the past much youth work was 'open access' or based on 'universal provision', where any young person was free to enter and leave of their own volition, the focus on problem groups has witnessed a shift towards targeted provision (Ritchie and Ord, 2016). Williamson (2017) suggests that traditional open access youth work has been increasingly abandoned in favour of:

...a stronger focus on measurable outcomes, evidence of impact, and targeted youth work (in terms of both social groups and social issues), especially in relation to the labour market. Some would argue that this calls into question the very nature of a "youth work" constructed on universality and youth autonomy. (p200)

De St Croix (2010) argues that practitioners risk being seen by young people as an additional layer of 'surveillance' which may undermine a relationship rooted in trust. However, Miller et al (2015) note that workers are still finding space to develop positive relationships with young people:

...the youth work principles that each organisation worked within were pivotal in creating social capital for the young people...the key finding was that this type of engagement was successful, not because of the activities or the settings, but because of what the youth work relationship imbued them with. (p482)

Williamson (2008) argues that there has been a lot of ‘mischief’ in the dichotomy between universal and targeted services, making the point that regardless of whether or not the work is targeted or universal, it is ultimately the relationship and skill of the practitioner that makes the difference in the lives of the young people. However, I would argue he fails to recognise that targeted work risks falling under what Fraser (1995a) terms affirmative redistribution. As a result young people can then find themselves blamed for requiring state intervention adding the insult of misrecognition to maldistribution.

For sure, targeted work can be of genuine value to young people but without placing its requirement within a broader structural analysis, practitioners are at risk of being complicit in social injustice (Moir and Crowther, 2014; Pisani, 2017). A survey of practitioners by Unison (2016) found many working with young people on issues such as health, fitness, smoking, violence, relationships, employability skills, lifestyle choices, youth achievement awards, self-harm, suicide, ICT learning and reducing isolation. There is little doubt that these types of programmes will be of value to the young people involved but the individualised focus of much of this work constructs the ‘problem’ as the young person (Corney, 2004; Smyth et al, 2013; Taylor, 2015; Wood et al, 2015). Instead of working to support young people to combat the injustices which may lie at the root of these issues (poverty or discrimination, for example) the fault is found in the individual and the responses aim to socialise them towards ‘appropriate’ behaviour (Coussée et al, 2012; Dickson et al, 2013; Hart, 2016; Taru, 2016). Coussée et al (2010) suggest that, as a result of the individualised focus on ‘problem’ groups of young people, practitioners are underemphasising the ‘social’ aspect of the work and formalising what are supposed to be the informal foundations of the practice.

The emphasis on ‘problem groups’ has also meant that the voluntary principle is said to have become compromised (Williamson, 2010; Taylor, 2012). Through partnership working with schools, engagement with young people in the justice system or employability work with young people compelled to attend, the voluntarism that underpinned youth work is eroded (Davies and Merton, 2009; Wood et al, 2015; Grace and Taylor, 2017). Such a change threatens the ability of practitioners to engage with young people and act as a barrier in relationship building (Ord, 2009). Schild and Williamson (2017) suggest that:



...compulsory systems hold the promise of much greater reach for youth work, by connecting with the contexts where young people are: schools, universities, vocational education and training sites, residential care, sports centres, health centres, hospitals and even custodial institutions. The question to be addressed is the extent to which the voluntary principle can be sustained within more coercive and regulated environments; it is not a question of abandoning it. (p253)

The voluntary principle also means that the content of any work undertaken with young people will require to be relevant to their lives and interests in the 'here and now'. If it is not, then practitioners risk young people voting with their feet and refusing to engage (Davis, 2009; Ord, 2009). The voluntary principle may be the first step towards work that addresses issues of injustice in the lives of young people. Davis (2009) argues, however, that:

...cheerleaders of the voluntary principle have questions of their own to answer. Perhaps most importantly, if you don't make some projects involuntary, how do you reach that group of young people that is most in need of youth work, and least likely to turn up at the club gates? (p15)

Ord (2009) suggests that 'youth work' can take place without a young person being voluntarily present as long as the worker pays attention to the quality of the relationship being nurtured, that the practice is rooted in conversation and the work is focused on the 'here-and-now.' Ord makes the important point that despite young people being voluntarily present, this does not necessarily mean they will engage with any activity taking place. On the other hand young people may be compelled to attend an activity (say for example in an employability programme on pain of losing benefits) but they may engage in an informal education activity occurring. However, for the most part, youth workers risk losing a core element of their identity if they give up on the principle of voluntary engagement (Taylor, 2009; Jeffs and Smith, 2010; de St Croix, 2016a; Jeffs, 2017). This debate is explored further in my study in chapter 7 with the practitioners.

#### **4.3.2 Performativity**

The focus on outcomes and performance creates a sizeable amount of paperwork, meaning practitioners can end up spending less time providing face-to-face support with young people (Spence et al, 2006; Lehal, 2010). de St Croix (2016) writes that:

...the negative consequences of accountability mechanisms based on top-down edicts, surveillance and routine paperwork are harming rather than improving grassroots practice...targets, tick-boxes and paperwork were seen by many interviewees as obstructive and demeaning of authentic relationship-based work with young people. Measurement systems do not seem to reflect 'real' youth work, and this creates a clash that challenges how grassroots youth workers see themselves. (83)

This is part of what Ball (2003a; 2004; 2012) (following Foucault and Lyotard) terms a culture of 'performativity', a policy technology that creates the self-governing employee, monitored and driven by systems of control – e.g. outcomes, performance indicators and inspections. In this way, Ball and Olmedo (2013) suggest that educators are:

...no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of *what they do*, but are required to produce measurable and 'improving' outputs and performances, what is important is *what works*. We are in danger of becoming transparent but empty, unrecognisable to ourselves. (p91 – *emphasis in original*)

Performativity is characterised by an audit-driven culture which sees educators beholden to achieving outcomes and this is the ultimate judgement of their performance. Bowl (2017) argues that elements of practice such as relationship building are relegated as the 'process of dialogue with colleagues and learners, is abandoned in favour of externally imposed measurements of performance, enforced by management threats and sanctions' (p5). Neo-liberalism is operating at the 'macro' level in its shaping of the political and economic structures and these filter down, shaping the 'micro,' the relationships educators have with learners. Measurement and comparison, Ball (2013) argues, is displacing the humanity which is central to the educational endeavour. As a result, Ball (2012) argues, neo-liberalism is said to be 'in here' as well as 'out there':

Performativity 'works' most powerfully when it is inside our heads and our souls; that is, when we monitor and manage ourselves, when we take responsibility for working harder, faster and better, thus 'improving' our 'output', as part of our sense of personal worth and in the ways we judge the worth of others...indeed performativity works best when we come to want for ourselves what is wanted from us; when our sense of purpose is aligned with its pleasures. (Ball, 2010: 125-6)

De St Croix (2016) argues that the practitioners in her study struggled with performativity, trying desperately to balance the competing demands of meeting targets

and outcomes desired by funders and trying to meet the immediate needs of the young people attending their sessions. These systems, she argues can change how it feels to be a youth worker, 'engendering a sense of dislocation and inner conflict' (p83). She makes an interesting connection with the concept of 'emotional labour'<sup>12</sup> whereby the practitioners she interviewed went above and beyond what was required of them, struggling to cope with the imposition of target-driven cultures, spending cuts and surveillance mechanisms at odds with their commitment to supporting the young people. De St Croix sees this as a form of exploitation of the practitioners willing to give extra as a result of their commitment to the young people.

### **4.3.3 Funding**

The focus on outcomes has also radically altered the funding landscape that workers operate within. Increasingly, practitioners are tied to short-term funding which is conditional upon them achieving pre-determined outcomes (Jeffs, 1997; Tyler, 2009). The short-term nature of much funding compromises the time required to develop the relationships which are at the heart of youth work (Davies and Merton, 2009; McKee, 2011; Davies, 2013). Jeffs and Smith (1999) make the point that for many of the young people that practitioners engage with, issues can be deep-rooted and require long-term intervention. Unfortunately, the short-term nature of much funding cannot fully address complex problems that require long-term intervention. Bright (2015) sums this predicament up well:

Policy formation is built on the basis of needing to evidence immediate results; it is this which perpetuates a climate of short-termism and knife-edged uncertainty that runs contrary to the very soul of committed relational practice with young people. (p247)

Again, evidence that the focus of practice is being led by current political agendas, rather than the needs of the young person (Spence and Wood, 2011).

At a more fundamental level, the ability of practitioners to respond to the needs of young people is compromised if they do not have the necessary resources. The ongoing

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<sup>12</sup> The concept of emotional labour was first developed by Hochschild (1983) in an ethnographic study of flight attendants. She defines it as 'labor...[that]...requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others - in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place. This kind of labor calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality' (p7).

impact of the 2008 global recession and the subsequent turn to austerity has had far reaching consequences for the provision of community/state sponsored services in the UK (Pantazis, 2016). Youth services have been cut across most nations in Europe (Siebel, 2017). In other parts of the UK, particularly in England, this has been significant with Williamson (2017) describing it as a 'death knell for many forms of youth work at the municipal level' (p191). Whilst youth services in Scotland have avoided the level of cuts seen in England, evidence suggests they have not escaped unharmed (YouthLink, 2010; Dunne et al, 2014; Unison, 2016). In a study of youth work services across Scotland, Unison (2016) reported that 83% of practitioners reported suffering 'cuts' or 'severe cuts' over the last five years leading to significant staff reduction, low morale as well as a lack of resources to provide essential services to marginalised young people. YouthLink (2016) reported to the Local Government and Communities Committee at the Scottish Parliament that the level of cuts has meant local authority Community Learning and Development (CLD) plans were now unsustainable and would have to be cut back:

Members felt that although youth work is often stated as a priority by the Scottish Government, the budget cuts at local authority level do not allow these strategies be realised. It was felt that local authorities see youth work services as discretionary services, making them even more vulnerable to cuts. (p4)

How these cuts have impacted on the practitioners in this study will be discussed in chapter 7.

#### **4.3.4 Employability and accreditation**

The funding landscape has resulted in practitioners being drawn into the employability agenda, where the majority of funding is being targeted. Siurala (2017) notes:

During times of austerity, youth work – on the lookout for resources and recognition – sometimes tries to legitimate itself within current political rhetoric and government policies. It may easily end up focusing on integrating young people into labour markets and reducing early school leaving and truancy and the like. Youth work can obtain more funds and even do a good job in this regard, but one must also ask how the new (politically legitimate) priorities may be changing youth work. (p229)

Since the global economic recession of 2008, the issue of youth unemployment has been pushed to the foreground of social policy with considerable concern regarding a

perceived 'lost generation' (Eichhorst and Rinne, 2017). Scotland is no different. Moir and Crowther (2014) note, 'employability features significantly in the Scottish policy context and is a key element of the Government's strategy to tackle unemployment and grow a strong and sustainable economy' (p46). This is particularly the case concerning their policy strategy surrounding young people (McGregor, 2015). This is evidenced by the large number of policy documents forming and informing the employability agenda around young people from the Scottish Government following the global downturn (Scottish Government, 2008; 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011a; 2011b; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d; 2014b; 2014c; 2015a; 2015b; 2015c, 2016b; 2018a; Youthlink Scotland, 2014). Due to this economic focus, much work with young people is now 'employability focused' with practitioners tasked to directly aid their progression into the labour market or under pressure to accredit learning to ensure young people are more attractive to prospective employers (Coburn, 2011; Chadderton and Colley, 2012; Simmons and Thompson, 2013; Moir and Crowther, 2014).

A relatively obscure term until the 1990s, the concept of employability is now central to labour market policy in the UK, Scotland and beyond (McQuaid, 2005; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Arora, 2015). Driven by the goals of neo-liberal globalisation and the acceleration of technological progress, governments around the world have prioritised the 'flexibilisation' of the workforce in order to adapt more swiftly to market requirements (Bollerot, 2001; Simmons and Thompson, 2011). Individuals are exhorted to constantly update skills and be ready to change jobs and careers at the drop of a hat in order to remain employable and meet labour market demands. Alongside, and driven by, the requirement to remain competitive in the global marketplace the last 30 years have witnessed a significant conceptual shift regarding how the issue of unemployment is framed. As Simmons and Thompson (2013) note:

...under social democratic regimes the state assumes at least some responsibility to reduce the worst excesses of social inequality and to stimulate the demand for labour, under neo-liberalism, poverty, deprivation and unemployment are recast as individualised issues rooted in various personal and moral deficiencies. (p1)

This individualistic conception drives what Peck and Theodore (2000) term a 'supply-side fundamentalism' as individuals are implored, and now compelled, to price themselves into work. Brown et al (2003) argue that focusing on the individual fails to

grasp the duality of employability as employment opportunities are inevitably governed by economic conditions and the state of local labour markets. Employability represents a 'new covenant' or 'new psychological contract' whereby workers are obligated to remain flexible and adaptable in this post-industrial knowledge society (Maguire, 2002; De Cuyper et al, 2008; Clarke and Patrickson, 2008). Conceived in this way, 'unemployment is not a collective problem, rather primarily the responsibility of the unemployed themselves; the obvious corollary is that our own ability and proclivity to work is rendered the chief explanation for affluence or hardship' (Berry, 2014). As such, it is argued that policy in the UK does not pay enough attention to the broader factors which contribute to young people's exclusion from the labour market. The policy agenda is instead driven by the belief that the responsibility for employment lies first and foremost with workers themselves (Bollerot, 2001; Johnson and Burden, 2003; Nickson et al, 2012; Berry, 2014).

The issue of employability is the most pertinent in contemporary youth work in Scotland and the UK today (Coussée, 2016; Unison, 2016; Williamson, 2017). Coussée (2016) suggests this has been the case since:

...the uprising of neo-liberalism and the growing belief that there is no alternative for capitalist meritocracy. This perspective sees youth work practice become – especially in Anglo-Americanised regimes – a part of an individualised youth policy aiming at employability and adopting a rather technical and utilitarian approach to social problems (p87).

Dunne et al (2014) agree, noting that employability has been the issue dominating practice in youth work across Europe for many years. They report that for many practitioners in Scotland results in them supporting young people with activities such as the 'preparation of a CV or interview approaches, to searching for jobs' (p146).

Miller et al (2015) note that in Scotland there has been an increasing recognition of the role that practitioners can play to re-engage disenfranchised young people into the labour market. Bowl (2017) suggests that this trend has permeated all post-compulsory education, with an emphasis on all adult learners working towards employability goals and particularly targeted at those lacking employability skills. For practitioners working with young people this has resulted in a focus on helping young people 'achieve' – gain accreditation that will give them a foothold in an increasingly competitive labour market (CLD, 2009; Davies and Merton, 2009; Lehal, 2010; Bowl, 2017). Coburn and

Wallace (2011) directly link this to the advent of neo-liberalism, the economisation of education and NPM – posing problems for the potential of the process of youth work:

The cultural template of new public management tends to foster compliance in meeting accountabilities related, for example, to the number of learners achieving 'successful' outputs against pre-determined outcomes, such as completing a portfolio and obtaining certification. Potentially profound and life-changing outcomes inherent in youth work learning processes may as a consequence be undervalued, underplayed or ignored. (p8)

Jeffs and Smith (2010) note that accredited work like this undermines the convivial nature of youth work which is the foundation of relationship building. They argue that state-sponsored youth work is increasingly seen by young people as more akin to school. The charge being that practitioners are working *on* young people, rather than *with* young people and the commitment to 'starting where young people are at' is undermined.

Jones (2012) writes that advocates of accreditation see it as valuable for youth workers. As they tend to work with marginalised young people, it offers a rare opportunity for those who have failed to achieve in the formal education setting gain alternative forms of accreditation. This, they argue, is vital in a society where credentials are essential for any form of paid employment. Other studies suggest that if practitioners pay attention to guiding principles, they can still assist young people to develop beyond the narrow parameters of an employment focused agenda (Davies, 2010; Coburn, 2011; IDYW, 2011; Deuchar and Ellis, 2013). It would be remiss to suggest that young people do not value the education and training opportunities workers are able to provide (Russell et al, 2010). But as Tett (2006) notes, 'without careful intervention within a social justice framework it can also serve to reinforce inequalities' (p19). Jones (2012) argues that the focus on these sorts of outcomes works to suppress the more radical forms of education which could offer young people an avenue to combat the injustices which exclude them in the first place.

Potentially, the most disquieting aspect of the accreditation agenda for practitioners, as highlighted in the previous chapter, is the question of how much currency the accreditation garnered in the work young people undertake with practitioners actually has? This is not just a scenario for practitioners in Scotland but across Europe, as youth workers find themselves delivering accreditation of questionable value (Schild et al,

2017). The process of assisting young people to register low-level accreditation may do little other than support young people to better manage their own labour market marginalisation. As Roberts (2013a) argues:

...the current system does little for the individual beyond providing them with something often perceived as a 'badge of dishonour' – a credential which is perceived...to hold no value for prospective employers or employees, whilst also being symptomatic of having no other 'worthy' qualifications. (282-3)

There exists the risk that practitioners, in this way, may actually contribute further to young people's maldistribution and misrecognition, relegated as they may be to the secondary labour market and seen as too risky to employ in a time of economic stagnation. Again, this is evidence of maldistribution and misrecognition intersecting to further cement the marginalisation of affected young people.

And given the evidence that low-level education and training programmes offer limited scope to develop the qualifications necessary to achieve participatory parity with their contemporaries who go on to higher education, it could be argued that this does little to combat the maldistribution these young people suffer. Indeed, Pascual and Martin (2017) suggest that practitioners delivering training programmes may actually be complicit in perpetuating injustice as they can:

...contribute to the legitimisation of a new social space characterised by precariousness and social vulnerability...[these]...youth employability policies not only fail to facilitate young people's social and professional integration (especially in the case of the most disadvantaged youth), but also actively contribute to reproducing the very problem they ostensibly seek to resolve. (p136)

Practitioners can legitimise the belief that these 'opportunities' do indeed offer a road to participatory parity, despite evidence suggesting otherwise (Roberts, 2013b; Simmons and Smyth, 2016). *Affirmative* measures such as these can help young people to 'manage' their own labour market marginalisation. And young people 'failing' to benefit from these opportunities can find themselves blamed for their inability to succeed in the labour market (Fraser, 2003). As a consequence, practitioners may be complicit in reinforcing the myth that competition in the labour market is meritocratic and that these young people are marginalised due to their own failings. The structural factors which led them to this point are airbrushed out of the picture as individual deficit is



conceptualised as the issue. The pursuit of accreditation individualises the learning process as young people are pushed towards individual 'achievement' (Jeffs and Smith, 2008). This focus makes it more challenging for practitioners to carry out the type of practice that could conceivably bring young people together in order to work together and challenge sites of common interest (or injustice).

#### **4.3.5 Partnership working**

Many writers make the point that policy has increasingly compelled youth workers to embrace partnership work in the face of declining finance (McConnell, 2002; Tett, 2006, Mason, 2015; Nico, 2017). Miller et al (2015) note that core Scottish policy initiatives such as Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scottish Executive, 2008) and the Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004) extol the virtue of inter-agency working. The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) has been particularly vocal in terms of advocating for schools to enter into partnership work with other professions (Davies, 2014, McGregor, 2015). As a result, youth workers are increasingly finding themselves operating in schools (Deuchar and Ellis, 2013; McGregor, 2015). This has enabled youth workers to reach a wider audience where their unique contribution can be brought to bear. In contrast, Davies (2014) contends this can be problematic in terms of teachers and youth workers working together with different philosophies of working with young people. For Corney (2006), youth workers adherence to informal education can mean that it is recognised to be in opposition to the formal education that characterises the school environment. Historically, he notes, this has resulted in a level of distrust between youth workers and teachers that may need to be overcome before productive working can occur.

Allied to this, partnerships can be problematic as professionals from different backgrounds may identify different priorities for those they work with (Buchroth and Parkin, 2010; Jones, 2012). Matthews (2001) argues that partnerships risk running into difficulties if there is a lack of understanding of partner's 'aspirations, culture, ways of working, constraints and timescales and the structural inequalities that can create disillusionment and even withdrawal among those who are the less powerful players of a partnership' (p315). This is particularly relevant for youth work, which is said to be, at times, opaque in terms of the outcomes desired by the practice, as it has historically

been unclear in its philosophy and aims (Spence, 2004; Buchroth, 2010). Davies (2005) suggests that workers risk being frozen out of potential partnerships if they are unable to clearly articulate the contribution they can make. Wylie (2010) argues that for 'purists' who adhere to 'process' driven work rather than focusing on outcomes, they will be under considerable pressure to be clear regarding aims of any work they undertake.

For advocates of partnership working, it is argued that it can bring together effectively a range of knowledges and resources that can secure improved outcomes for young people (Phillips, 2010; Sercombe, 2010; Bochel and Daly, 2014). Sercombe (2010) suggests that partnership working is promoted in social policy as a means of best serving young people without highlighting its sometimes problematic nature. He argues, however, that the short-termism of the funding landscape can make it difficult for partner agencies to develop a common understanding of role. This, he contends, is due to different professions coming together with contrasting knowledge bases and their own ways of addressing issues. Tett et al (2003) agrees, asserting that the focus on collaborative working is problematic within the neo-liberal framework:

...partnerships need time and resources in order to build a meta-strategy that is designed to allow all relevant interests to explore possible ways forward. They also need to be able to advance their own mission whilst, at the same time, building up the capacity (trust, understanding, synergy) to engage in effective and sustained collaborative working. (p49)

However, the pressure of short-term outcomes means that collaborations can lack the time required to build such successful partnerships. Wood et al (2015) agree, writing that the most effective partnerships are built when time is given to allow partners to build a relationship of trust and a congruence of aims.

The issue with partnership working is said to be more acute for youth work practitioners when it comes to working with other state-sponsored practitioners. Davies and Merton (2009) suggest that practitioners risk losing their 'trusted' status with marginalised young people if they are seen as another 'one of the suits' (p20). Davies (2011) argues this can be particularly fraught for youth workers who work alongside schools and the police, where they see themselves as 'advocates' for young people rather than seeing them in deficit. If they do not integrate with other professions, they risk being seen as 'precious' or even unprofessional. McGregor (2015) points out

that 'qualitative research...suggests that ideological differences and entrenched professional identities remain a significant barrier to successful partnership working, particularly if it is to be a partnership of equals' (p71). Youth workers often find they can be the 'poor relations' in partnership arrangements, particularly in school settings (Tett et al, 2003; Corney, 2006; Sercombe, 2010; Davies, 2011; Davies, 2014; Wood et al, 2015). Worse still, the competitive contract culture that is almost ubiquitous in youth work today can undermine the trusting relationships that are the foundation of profitable partnership work (Jeffs and Smith, 2008; Milbourne, 2009; Sercombe, 2015).

Bradford & Byrne (2010) make the point in their study that partnerships can threaten a professional's hard-won sense of expertise, as other practitioners bring varied skills and knowledge to collaborative work. Jones (2012) builds on this point writing that professionals, bringing their discrete expertise, can diagnose issues in contrasting ways and have different priorities for those they work with:

...for example, a youth worker, a midwife, a school teacher and a social worker would not share a perception concerning the relative importance of the different issues generated by a pregnant 15-year-old. Moreover, there is a tendency for each to believe that their assessment is 'correct' and inherently superior, generating an attitude which pervades their encounters with other professionals....the danger associated with sharing elements of training is the dilution of key elements of each separate profession. (p168)

The notion of partnership working is not without potential pitfalls as will be discussed in chapter 7 when the practitioner's accounts of their experiences working collaboratively are explored.

#### **4.3.6 Work with specific groups**

Taylor (2017) suggests that youth organisations are often guilty of treating young people as a homogenous group. Connected to participation and the pursuit of genuine empowerment, the *In Defence of Youth Work* (IDYW, 2011) group mission statement states that it is essential for democratic and emancipatory youth work to recognise difference; 'the continuing necessity of recognising that young people are not a homogeneous group and that issues of class, gender, race, sexuality, disability and faith remain central' (p7). Garasia et al (2015) write that practitioners that do not take individual characteristics into account risk being complicit in entrenching marginalisation and exclusion of young people:

On a micro level, it means that hierarchies between young people and staff, for example, would likewise need to be accepted as just 'the world we operate in' and set the stage for their practice...this means youth work passively aligns itself with whatever political discourses and practices already dominate, from neoliberalism to patriarchy and disabilism, rather than challenging them. Through this process of becoming depoliticised, youth work paradoxically becomes an inherently political and deeply conservative pursuit. (p5)

In this they echo the point many others have made – education cannot be neutral, rather it can either be a force for change and challenge, or for reinforcing the status quo (Freire, 1972, Usher et al, 1997; Martin, 1999). Agencies working with young people and their employees have an essential role in promoting cultural justice for minority groups or risk reinforcing misrecognition (Feldman, 2002).

Batsleer (2013a), writing about the English context, suggests that feminist work with young women has never been more essential, but is currently under threat from cuts to services. She argues that young women experience particular challenges in terms of accessing youth services. They tend to have more domestic commitments, parental pressure at home is greater for young women than young men, women are more vulnerable in public space and 'the challenge of creating girl-friendly spaces where society provides none must be accepted' (p189). Cullen (2013) suggests that there has been a lack of focus on the issues facing young women in recent years, in contrast with an increasing concern and emphasis on the academic underperformance of young men. As a result, she claims this has 'resulted in a relative lack of focus and funds on the needs of young women in both formal and informal education settings including youth services' (p26). This has been the case for some time – that youth work has been a male preserve with policy concerns focused on young men; presenting them as criminals and 'at-risk' of unemployment (Griffin, 1997; Oliver, 2008; Batsleer, 2017). Batsleer (2017) argues that work to combat sexism has become unfashionable and today attracts less funding. Batsleer (2013a) observes that much work is now so employment focused and critical work which contests gender relations is largely absent. Indeed, she makes the point that some practitioners may be complicit in this process as inclusion projects can promote highly gendered educational pathways towards stereotypical labour destinations such as motor vehicle workshops for boys, hair and beauty for girls. This, she argues, 'does little to challenge or even open up conversations about the existing forms of class and gender relations' (p296).

In terms of working with young minority ethnic women, Batsleer (2013b) argues that their particular needs and issues are erased out of work - even in female-only spaces. She suggests that 'black women workers consistently report a sense that their work is dismissed, ignored or simply not valued' (p190-1) and goes on to argue that in relation to Asian women, separate provision has perhaps been counter-productive in terms of building cross-cultural consensus. In more general terms, Batsleer (*Ibid*) suggests that youth work with minority ethnic groups has been largely unsupported in terms of resources, expected to take place with the 'crumbs dropped...from the 'white man's table' (p200). Writing in a Finnish context, Honkasalo (2013) writes that 'mainstream' youth work can erase the experience of young Muslim women, positioning them as 'victims of their culture and that only an adoption of western values and upbringing can help them integrate' (p59). She goes on to suggest that young women from minority ethnic backgrounds can lack support within their communities, so a youth work that begins from their experience is required.

Kivijärvi (2014), also in a Finnish context, found that young people (male and female) from Muslim backgrounds can be positioned as backwards, irrational and primitive. Although suffering from a lack of resources, practitioners were working hard to combat the racism that these young people were suffering. It will be necessary to ascertain whether or not the practitioners in this study are encountering similar barriers in their work. Dunne et al (2014) report that, in Scotland, established forms of youth work have struggled to engage 'groups that do not share the same cultural references as the majority population' (p137). Their research also reveals that government support for young disabled people has declined across Europe. This, they argue, places greater responsibility on practitioners to create opportunities for young disabled people to participate in society. Focusing on those working with young disabled people, Cooper (2012) notes that the disempowerment they encounter in their daily lives can fuel their disconnection from the political sphere. As a result, there is perhaps a greater onus on practitioners working with these young people to combat their misrepresentation. Worth (2009) makes the point that we live in an ableist society which positions young disabled people 'as vulnerable and in need of care rather than autonomously negotiating adulthood' (p1051). Therefore, it is essential when working with disabled youth that participants are offered the opportunity to reflect on the contextual factors

which can contribute towards their marginalisation. And this is the case for all minority groups – without taking into consideration the specific requirements related to their identity the practitioners risk further embedding injustice, rather than working with young people to challenge it.

#### **4.3.7 Democratic participation**

As outlined in the previous chapter, the evidence suggests a sizeable number of young people are disempowered (or marginalised) from the political sphere. Many authors note that modern governmental structures limit the opportunity for young people to exercise agency and to participate in decision-making processes (Tsekoura, 2016; Wagaman, 2016; Briggs, 2017). This is particularly important for practitioners working with young people since they tend to engage with the most marginalised young people (Coussée, 2016; de St Croix, 2016b). Bringing young people together to participate meaningfully in society and to enable them to have a voice on issues that matter to them is argued to be a fundamental aspect of youth work across Europe today (Vanhee and Schild, 2012; Cuzzocrea, 2017; Taru, 2017). Indeed, Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explicitly states that young people have the right to be listened to and the Scottish Government (2014a) agree; ‘in keeping with Article 12...we support and promote the active participation and engagement of young people (p19). Wood et al (2015) suggest that:

Youth work has a long history of describing itself as strengthening the voice and influence of young people. Various terms have underpinned this work: empowerment, participation, active citizenship and democratic engagement...practitioners create opportunities for democratic behaviour to flourish. (p4)

The Scottish Government (2014a) agrees with this sentiment, stressing that ‘youth work is an empowering process which enables young people to exercise genuine power, to take decisions, follow them through and take responsibility for their consequences’ (p14). Garasia et al (2015) point out that ‘empowerment’ as conceived in neo-liberal government policy has little to do with enabling young people to participate in the structures of democracy. Instead, they argue that youth work has been co-opted to develop a personal form of empowerment in young people, to enable them to fit in to government policy agenda’s. The young people in their study:

...spoke about youth clubs as not being places where they felt they could be political agents, or occasionally, as spaces where they had been politically silenced...if youth work is meant to be underpinned partly by empowering pedagogies, that encourage youthful citizenship, emancipation and socially focussed development, this small study suggests that it can potentially be depoliticised to a point where it becomes a politically conservative practice. It can be seen as a service just to 'get children off the streets' rather than a progressive practice. (p14)

Sercombe (2010) argues that empowerment as conceived in policy is little more than a drive towards individual self-actualisation. Other writers agree, suggesting that if youth work continues to eschew genuine empowerment, practitioners risk actively contributing to young people's declining presence in democracy (Sercombe, 2010; Nicholls, 2012; Shukra et al, 2012; Wood et al, 2015).

Taylor (2015) takes this point further, suggesting that the notion of empowering individuals serves to mask the structural relations that create inequalities in the first place. Bowl (2017) agrees and develops this point, arguing that:

Empowerment...defined as the development of political awareness as a precursor to social action which is, in turn, directed to the creation of a more socially just and equal social order – has been denuded of its radical meaning. In its place the neo-liberalised notion of 'empowerment' signifies self-efficacy, self-sufficiency and personal responsibility for ensuring one's own economic and personal well-being.' (p26)

Again, the point here in terms of justice is that practitioners supporting young people towards an individualising participatory agenda which foregrounds responsibility rather than genuine empowerment could risk being complicit in cementing their ordinary-political misrepresentation.

This risk is compounded for the practitioners working in partnership with schools as the Curriculum for Excellence lists four capacities<sup>13</sup> that educators are to work towards. One of these is to enable young people to become 'responsible citizens.' The Scottish Government (2009) define responsible citizens as having 'respect for others' with a 'commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life' and 'make informed choices and decisions and develop informed, ethical views of complex issues' (piii). Biesta (2008) argues that these again are little more than a focus

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<sup>13</sup> The Scottish Government (2018b) write that the 'CfE is intended to foster four capacities in all young people: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors' (p83).

on the individualistic aspects of citizenship which foregrounds the notion of responsibility. Rather than aiming towards the aspects of citizenship which could drive social change and challenge exclusion and marginalisation, the view of citizenship put forward by the Scottish Government 'could do with more attention for the political dimensions of citizenship and the promotion of forms of political literacy that position democratic citizenship beyond individual responsibility' (p50). An emphasis on individual character and responsibility may distract attention from those social problems which marginalise young people and depoliticise educational practice (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004).

Chadderton and Colley (2012) point out that the imposition of top-down outcomes and performance indicators has made the cultivation of political inclusion more challenging for practitioners. Instead, practitioners are finding their intervention is increasingly targeted at 'controlling' young people and meeting outcomes that evidence young people are more employable (Shukra et al, 2012; Garasia et al, 2015; Tsekoura, 2016). Mckee (2011) agrees, writing that youth work can play a part in enabling young people to shape their own futures but the target culture is making this increasingly difficult. Youth work has to find a balance in order to secure funding as well as working with young people to realise their potential. In this study I investigate whether the practitioners face similar tensions in their work and, how this impacts on their work with the young people in ways that aid their democratic participation and *truly* empower them.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

From the review of literature, it has emerged that the current policy landscape that practitioners must negotiate appears challenging regarding their ability to root their practice in the three definitive features of youth work as outlined in the *Statement on the Nature and Purpose of Youth Work*. It is worth re-iterating these at this point:

- 1) That young people choose to participate
- 2) The work must build from where people are
- 3) Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process



These definitive features are argued in the literature to be foundational if practitioners are able to respond to issues of injustice with the young people they engage with. It is encouraging that these features are endorsed by the Scottish Government and are considered integral to the practice. However, the primary findings from this chapter suggest a number of issues impeding the practitioner's ability to anchor their practice in these features, and these can be summarised as follows:

- *Targets and outcomes* – The governance structures of NPM that have been introduced within the public sector have had a profound impact on youth work practice. Rather than addressing the specific needs of young people, the imposition of a target-driven regime results in practitioners working towards whatever policy imperative is in vogue. This is critical in terms of addressing injustice in the lives of the young people practitioners engage with. Rather than doing so, they are instead compelled to work 'on' young people (rather than 'with' them), potentially pathologising what policy deems problematic behaviour.
- *Performativity* – Connected to the above, the imposition of a target-driven regime results in the ultimate judgement of performance being whether or not practitioners meet the targets demanded by funding bodies. This is argued to be reshaping the *process* of youth work – rather than relationship-building with young people being the first priority, the meeting of outcomes takes precedence.
- *Funding* – Much practice is now tied to short-term funding which comes with pre-ordained outcomes to meet. This again puts additional pressure on practitioners to jettison the more long-term, process-driven practice in favour of prioritising short-term immediate solutions to meet funding requirements. The ability of practitioners to address the more long-term, deep-rooted issues that may be negatively impacting upon young people's lives is argued to be compromised. The literature also points to an environment across the UK which has seen significant cuts to youth work services, hindering the ability of practitioners to meet the needs of young people.
- *Employability and accreditation* – Since the great recession of 2008, social policy in Scotland is argued to have been dominated by the issue of employability. This has seen youth work directed towards delivering a narrow, economically driven

agenda concerned with ensuring young people are more employable. Rather than focusing on the immediate needs of young people, the literature suggests practitioners are tied to delivering and directing young people towards training programmes and low-level accreditation.

- *Partnership working* – Partnership working is now central to the delivery of services to children and young people in Scotland. Core social policy initiatives promote collaborative practice as key to effective service delivery. As a consequence, practitioners increasingly find themselves working with other professionals – particularly alongside teaching staff in schools. However, the literature points to a number of tensions with this arrangement.
- *Work with specific groups* – The literature states that youth organisations are potentially failing to take account of - and recognise - difference, treating young people as a homogenous group. Such a position may contribute to the entrenchment of discrimination and marginalisation. It is argued that the economic focus of much youth work today has seen the diversion of funding away from work that challenges sexism, racism and ableism.
- *Democratic Participation* – Youth work is argued to have a history of working to truly empower young people to have a voice in the issues that matter in their lives. However, the literature suggests youth work is being co-opted towards delivering a narrow, individualised agenda, rather than promoting the *association* of young people. Rather than working with young people to collectively realise their voice, practitioners are argued to be pushed by policy towards ensuring individual young people act responsibly. Again, the narrow economic focus of funding and the outcome-focused agenda described above is said to shut down the possibility of practitioners working with young people in a way that would give them voice. Instead, their time is taken up ensuring young people are more employable.

All of the issues described above were explored with the practitioners and excerpts from these interviews are given and analysed in chapter 7. If, as is argued in the literature, the practice of youth work is committed to working with young people to challenge injustice then it is necessary to interrogate whether contemporary practitioners are able to do so. The absence in the literature of any systematic

application of a theory of social justice to the practice of youth work is striking. This is an essential gap in our knowledge and understanding of the purpose of youth work practice. As the previous chapter indicates, young people today face numerous barriers to their achieving participatory parity. Therefore it was decided to explore the experiences of a group of practitioners working in the current context to investigate whether or not they felt able to 'start where the young people are at,' and address any injustice impacting on those they work with. It is worth re-stating that the aim of this study is not to evaluate the practitioners themselves. Fraser's framework is engaged as a lens to analyse the landscape they encounter in their practice, and the concept of participatory parity is employed to assess whether or not practitioners are able to work towards addressing injustice in the lives of the young people. With this in mind, the research methodology for this study was designed to critically explore this and the other research questions outlined in chapter 1.

## **Chapter 5 - Research Design and Methodology**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The review of literature presented in the previous two chapters confirms that there exists a gap in studies on the experiences of young people in relation to social injustice and the capacity of youth workers to address these. In particular, the application of social justice theory to examine, critique and understand the young people's lives as they move toward 'full' adulthood. It is critical to find a way to address these problems at the level of professional intervention. There is also a gap in knowledge around practitioners working with young people in terms of whether or not the relationship between policy and practice allows them the opportunity to intercede in any issues of injustice in the lives of those they engage with. This led to five research questions that my study set out to address:

1. What are the experiences of this group of young people in their journey from school to adult independence?
2. What social justice issues exist for these young people?
3. What is the impact of the relationship between policy and practice for practitioners working with young people?
4. How does participatory parity as a goal for social justice help us understand this context?
5. Do the experiences of young people move beyond Fraser's framework? How adequate is the framework of participatory parity for capturing injustice?

### **5.2 Theoretical basis**

This thesis is a qualitative empirical endeavour, utilising two different interview approaches through which to collect data. Qualitative research is fundamentally about investigating the interface between individual experience, construction of meaning and broader societal processes and theorising from these to generate explanations of these phenomena (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003; Gläser and Laudel, 2013). As my study's primary motive was to critically analyse the *experience* of young people as they navigate their way from school to adult independence, it is firmly rooted in the interpretive paradigm (Hakim, 2000; Sandberg, 2005). Underwriting the interpretive paradigm is the belief

that individuals comprehend and make sense of the social world around them through their experience and interaction within it (Lincoln et al, 2011). Knowledge is a human construction and as such, the only way researchers can explore this shared reality is by critically analysing 'how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world' (Sandelowski, 2004: 893). This constructivist approach to research is based on the belief that knowledge is not 'out there', but is brought into being by the everyday realities as perceived by the participants (Holstein and Gubrium, 2011a). The qualitative paradigm that is adopted here means that the notion of an objective 'truth' can be discounted as participants experiences and observations are always grounded in and filtered through subjective lenses such as gender, class and ethnicity (Denzin, 2006; Altheide and Johnson, 2011). This does not signal an acceptance of pure subjectivity however, as most qualitative researchers accept the view that although we interpret and interact with the world around us from a particular viewpoint, the wider context impacts on us, limiting the points of view that are possible (Hammersley, 1995; Seale, 1999; Maxwell, 2012). Understandings of the world are shared albeit these are individually constructed in the interaction between structure and agency (Kvale, 1996). What is being sought here is the interpretation of the lived experience of interview participants, not a window to an 'objective' reality. Qualitative researchers reject the:

...possibility of uncovering 'facts', 'realities' or 'truths' behind the talk, and treat as inappropriate any attempt to vet what people say for its... 'reliability' or 'validity' ...from this perspective, what...[respondents]...say should not be taken as evidence of their experience, but only as a form of talk which represents a culturally available way of packaging experience. (Kitzinger, 2004: 128)

Therefore, it is possible to analyse the experiences of the young people and practitioners and look for patterns in how they make sense of and construct the world around them, accepting that there is no 'universal truth.'

In this way, the ontological and epistemological framework described above complements and works in tandem with critical theory. Kincheloe (2005) argues that these two perspectives work synergistically, offering a unified theory (or what he terms a *bricolage*). Fraser's framework, therefore, is an ideal companion for the constructivist paradigm underpinning this research. Critical theorists and social constructivists both place a high value on the belief that social relations must be interpreted (Schofield-

Clark, 2010). The constructivist and critical perspectives combine again in their rejection of researcher objectivity; 'a chimera: a mythological creature that never existed, save in the imaginations of those who believe that knowing can be separated from the knower (Lincoln et al, 2011: 122). However, as Skeggs (1997) noted in her seminal study 'just because we value something does not mean that we cannot come up with an objective (in the first sense) account. Also, values may enable us to recognize things that others would prefer to overlook (gender, race, class, etc.)' (p33). This is the case here, with the focus on age alongside the 'traditional' axes that have been well scrutinised by feminist and critical theorists. Social science in this sense is a practical-political project (Morris, 2011). The analysis and interpretation that is gleaned here by the use of Fraser's framework identifies areas of social life which work to marginalise the young people. Critical theory is unashamedly partisan in its belief that research should work to explicate areas of oppression and this study is no different (Cohen et al, 2007). However, it is important to be vigilant in our interpretations to strive for rigour and reflexivity is a crucial component towards this.

### **5.3 Reflexivity**

From a critical constructivist perspective it is unavoidable that the researcher has a role to play in the production of data. From topic selection to the analysis and presentation of data, it is inevitable that researcher influence will be present throughout the study (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Crang and Cook, 2007). Indeed, critical theory presupposes that this is the case (Hammersley, 1995). However, in order to strive towards rigour and to guard against our own pre-conceived assumptions, we as researchers must strive to be reflexive in our interpretations throughout the research process. Reflexivity means asking not just 'what do I know?' but also permeating the process with the question, 'how do I know what I know?' As Guillemin and Gillam (2004) point out 'reflexivity in research is thus a process of critical reflection both on the kind of knowledge produced from research and how that knowledge is generated' (p274). It is therefore important to discuss my position in this research process, as someone who strives to reveal sites of oppression and domination in the lives of the participating young people. My own interest in this topic of study stems from two primary motivations; first, as someone who has worked with young people as a practitioner for many years and has always sought to act as an advocate on their issues

and, second, as someone who has long held an interest in social justice. Hence my choice of focusing on young people as well as deciding to utilise the framework of social justice advocated and developed by Nancy Fraser – herself an unabashed socialist and feminist.

Partly to combat any charge of my own personal bias influencing the research and partly to aid my own development as a researcher I decided to use a ‘reflexive journal’. I anticipated this would assist in consciously acknowledging values, personal assumptions, navigating my role as both an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ throughout the research process as well as decisions related to the analysis of the data (Ortlipp, 2008). Nadin and Cassell (2006) make the point that the researcher should be careful not to be dragged into self-indulgence, but with careful use a journal can help integrate reflexivity into the entire research process. For Nadin and Cassell, its use prompted valuable consideration of ontological and epistemological issues and impacted upon methodological and analytical decisions in the research process and the final theoretical conclusions. I found it extremely useful to reflect on my practice as an interviewer – revisiting and critiquing my execution of the narrative interviews with the young people particularly. An entry from the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2016, following two interviews notes:

*Listening back to interviews as I transcribe, it is clear I am not heeding the advice from textbooks – interrupting the young people and not allowing them space to develop their thoughts. Quite embarrassing listening back to these. Must rectify.*

Reflecting upon my role as an insider who had worked with many of the young people proved complex. During an interview a young person known to me became upset when discussing his life. It was important to carefully think about my role – was I a practitioner? A researcher? A counsellor? Although it was important for me to reflect upon this I had to consider the ethical dilemma, balancing the confidentiality of the young person with his safety and security. Despite the strain on myself, the reflexive journal was a useful outlet for further consideration of these difficult moments in the research process:

*During and after David's interview, I had a real sense of disquiet as he was discussing his current life situation, particularly what appears to be his chronic sense of loneliness and suicidal thoughts. Luckily I am ASIST trained and followed the advised procedure. He assured me he was not contemplating suicide. However, I felt compelled to discuss this with the staff there and notified Sarah that I felt I had to do so as I was concerned for his wellbeing. I*

*asked for his permission to do this, knowing I was going to notify them in any case. He agreed with my action. I offered to halt the interview but he wanted to continue so we did. I notified the staff after the interview and they agreed to pursue the matter. I felt uncomfortable with this situation and in hindsight should perhaps have known that difficult conversations like this would arise in the course of the research.*

Such unforeseen circumstances will commonly reveal themselves during the research process. It is impossible to guard against every eventuality when considering difficult situations while seeking ethical clearance to conduct research (Bauman, 1993; Silverman, 2011). However, as recorded in my journal, it is clear that such situations will arise during qualitative research as we as researchers occupy a certain 'space' in the lives of participants (even if it is fleeting). Are we a friend? Is our relationship with participants fake? Is our friendliness and active listening instrumental? These are difficult questions we need to ask ourselves (Ryen, 2011). There are no easy answers to these questions but I certainly believe that the utilisation of the journal through the research allowed me to ask these difficult questions of myself. I feel that there has been a degree of instrumentality to my working with the young people but hope that I have been honest about the cost/benefit to the participants and also given them something back in terms of listening attentively to their stories.

#### **5.4 Data collection –Young people and practitioners**

As the study looked to draw out the experience of the young people I decided to employ a narrative approach. This further cements the link between the constructivist and critical approaches as both seek to 'give voice' to groups that are marginalised or ignored (Riessman, 2008; Hammersley, 2013). Although there are no overall rules about narrative approaches to research (Andrews et al, 2008; Bold, 2012), it promotes investigating then interpreting people's *stories* (Finnegan, 1998; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The narrative mode of thinking:

...uses stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences, the changes and challenges of life events, and the differences and complexity of people's actions. It strives to put events into the stories of experience in order to locate the experience in time and place. It incorporates the feelings, goals, perceptions, and values of the people whom we want to understand...it provides explanatory knowledge of human experiences which allows the portrayal of rich nuances of meaning in emplotted stories. (Kim, 2015: 11)



Narratives are particularly well-placed to unpack and explicate experience as they allow individuals the space and time to produce long sections of talk, providing a vivid picture of their life (Riessman, 2008, 2011; Squire et al, 2014). Heath et al (2009) argue that the narrative form is particularly suited to researching the lives of young people 'given that so much research in this area is concerned with *process* and *transition*' (p84 - *emphasis in original*). Narrative research is well-matched to analyse the interplay of structure and agency in the youth transition, as it gives space to the young person to describe the events important to them. It is in the critical analysis of the narrative that the researcher can begin to unpick the processes impacting upon their life. Further strengthening this methodology's appropriateness to answer my research questions, Kim (2015) explicitly advocates for narrative as a methodology to underpin critical theory, stating that 'we need to make an effort to remove the distance between theorising and reality. Theory devoid of lived experience would be like an empty tin can that just makes noise' (p41).

Returning to the notion of 'truth' in the narrative process, it is perhaps worth emphasising that the information sought is not so much the meanings held *within* research participants as their understanding of phenomena, the reflections they have upon these and the context within which this unfolds (Miller and Glasner, 2011; Holstein and Gubrium, 2011b). It is up to the researcher to examine and interpret the representations within the data produced (Cortazzi, 1993). The task then is to connect the stories to the processes and practices of society and, in the case of this study, the social justice issues inherent within these. As Finnegan (1998) notes:

...the narrators are individuals, but this is not the old 'individual versus society' metaphor. Rather, story-telling represents one potent form in which individuals both create, and draw creatively on, a shared cultural potential for their own unique but communicable performances. (p179)

This, again, bridges the gap between Fraser's framework and narrative. For Fraser (Fraser et al, 2004), the individual is the ultimate unit of justice, but eschewing an atomistic ontology she makes the point that injustice occurs due to systemic practices inherent in the structures of society which affect individuals by virtue of their shared membership of group identity. As she notes, 'it follows that individual problems become matters of justice if and when they cumulate into a pattern that can be traced to a systemic cause' (p378). Looking for patterns across the stories it is possible to draw out justice issues pertinent to young people in the period post-school as they (attempt to)

navigate towards adult independence. Like other researchers who use narrative research, I am less interested in the form of the narrative but their thematic meanings and understanding the 'point' that the young people are making (Ewick and Silbey, 1995; Riessman, 2008; Heath et al, 2009).

Conducting narrative research also brought a number of challenges. First, as the interviews were relatively unstructured, the flow of dialogue was in the hands of respondents. This is the price I paid for trying to gain the voice of the young people. But as Squire et al (2014) note, this does not mean that the interviewer is passive – 'you can play an active role through active listening, and by asking occasionally relevant questions for probing and clarifying during the course of the interview, as long as you are cautious enough not to make any intrusion that might alter it' (p164). This meant attending to my 'active listening' skills (Robertson, 2005) – leaving space after the young people had paused as often they were gathering their thoughts before extending on what had come before. This often brought profitable sections of talk. Often the interview would move into a *conversation phase* which tended to be semi-structured, with more questioning and interchange as pertinent points were followed up, those that had been flagged up in the narrative (Kim, 2015).

Second, and perhaps the key challenge of narrative research, is the phrasing of questions. Josselson and Lieblich (2003) make the important point that narrative questions must ask for *exploration*. It is fundamental to avoid both (a) questions that can be simply answered, but equally too (b) 'grand tour' questions which lack focus (Squire et al, 2014). Squire (2008) advises that when trying to elicit narratives on particular experiences such as this study aimed to, the best course of action was to ask questions such as 'can you give me an example of...' or 'tell me more about...'. Squire et al (2014) suggest that useful questions can be categorised in four ways; *open-ended*, *descriptive*, *structural* and *contrast* and give some useful examples of these. Morrissey (1987) also recommended a 'two-question' format which consists of a statement followed by a question. Appendice 1 shows the interview schedule used in the conversations with the young people. It was clear that prior to the interviews with the young people careful consideration would have to be given to the formulation of questions and possible methods of follow-up. Two suitable young people were

identified in order to pilot questions and 'test' their effectiveness. Minor changes were made after the first and these worked well in the second.

The third and final challenge applies to both types of interviews conducted and that is that they are resource intensive. For the purpose of interviewing the practitioners, the study returned to more 'traditional' semi-structured interviewing. The great strength of qualitative research is:

...it can shed light on phenomena about which little is known. It is often used in an exploratory way to 'illuminate' the life circumstances of individuals and communities, particularly those circumstances that deepen forms of harm and exclusion. (Squire et al, 2014: 74)

As the focus here was on illuminating the experience of the practitioners in relation to their ability to address injustice in the lives of the young people they engage with, interviews were again deemed the most appropriate method. As the goal was to elucidate the interface between policy and practice and explore the issues identified in chapter 4 that are argued impede the practitioner's ability to 'start where the young people are at,' semi-structured interviews were felt more appropriate for this purpose (Denzin, 1989; Byrne, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to investigate themes under investigation whilst at the same time allowing a degree of freedom in order that new insights can emerge (Bold, 2012; Thomas, 2013). Despite their more structured nature (than the narrative interviews) they are still time-consuming to conduct (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013). Gillham (2000) warns that this time goes beyond the interview itself:

The extra 'cost' needs spelling out: 1) Developing and piloting the interview  
2) Setting up and travelling to and from the interview location 3)  
Transcribing the interview 4) Analysing the interview. (p9)

Adopting a semi-structured approach still gave space to the respondents to express their thoughts and perspectives on the issues discussed and maintained a 'natural' feel to the interview (Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2013; Thomas, 2013). Interview schedules used with the practitioners can be found in appendice 2.

In contrast to the challenges, it is perhaps worth highlighting the benefits of interviewing. For both interview types the ultimate aim is to grasp the point of view of

the participants. The interview offers a privileged position to do just that, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue:

The expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts. A crucial feature of language is its capacity to present descriptions, explanations, and evaluations of almost infinite variety about any aspect of the world, including itself. (p126)

The qualitative interview allows researchers to investigate the social world of participants, gaining insight into their experiences, feelings, beliefs and attitudes (Hakim, 2000; Hammersley, 2003; Altheide and Johnson, 2011). Kvale (2007) makes the point that, when done well, the interview is a 'natural' medium for obtaining information; 'the interview is sensitive to and reflects the nature of the object investigated – a conversational human world' (p121). A skilled interviewer can draw out interviewee's thoughts, feelings and reflections on the experiences they seek to investigate. Ultimately there are no hard and fast rules for research interviews, it rests upon the skill of the researcher:

...which goes beyond a mastery of questioning techniques to encompass knowledge of the research topic, sensitivity to the social relation of the interviewer and subject, and an awareness of epistemological and ethical aspects of research interviewing' (*Ibid*: 90).

Choak (2012) suggests that when interviewing young people it is advisable to create an informal atmosphere to reduce the power dynamics at play. An important step in this direction is to conduct interviews in the young person's home or in the youth centre they frequent. All the interviews I conducted with the young people took place in the youth centres they attended. In order to put the young people at ease, the initial stage of the interviews were conducted around the young people's interests in order to build rapport. This was particularly important for those interviews with young people less well known to me. For all these participants, I met with them once before interview in order that they were familiar with me (to some degree). As a consequence, when I did return at a later date to conduct the interview I was not a complete stranger (Ronksley-Pavia and Grootenboer, 2017). Perhaps the two most important facets of interviewing are the relationship and trust (or rapport) built between interviewer and interviewee and an interviewer's ability to listen attentively and show respect to what is being said (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Narayan and George, 2012; Squire et al, 2014). Sensitivity to both was an absolute must for the interviews to be productive.

## 5.5 Porttown

You don't have to spend long in Porttown to realise that this is an area of significant contrasts. Porttown is a community that is economically, socially and physically divided with pockets of poverty and deprivation situated a stone's throw from new, luxury developments (Anon, 2009). At the heart of the community is a shopping precinct and thoroughfare that has seen better days, with pound shops, pawn shops, charity shops and high-interest, rent-to-own stores. This is a tired, grey area. Just a two minute walk away, however, is the redeveloped waterfront with brasseries, Michelin star restaurants, luxury flats, tourist destinations and up-market retail outlets – the disparity is abrupt. In the mid-1990s the area was notorious as a grim haven of drugs, prostitution and crime. Fast forward to 2018 and it has recently been voted one of the 'coolest' city neighbourhoods in the world (Anon, 2018a).

Since the 1980s, Porttown has undergone significant change as a process of gentrification has seen the area radically altered (Anon, 2009). Perhaps the starkest illustration of the divisions that exist is in the statistics on local poverty. Statistics for the area recorded in 2014 reveal that nearly a quarter of households experience material deprivation - one of the highest in the city. Material deprivation here is defined as being 'unable to afford several items regarded by a majority of the population as essentials of life in Britain' (Anon, 2014a). Similarly, nearly a quarter of children growing up in the area live in households defined as being below the poverty threshold (*Ibid*). Porttown also has the highest percentage of people in the city in receipt of unemployment related benefits (Anon, 2018b). Contrastingly, students and young professionals continue to move in and the area is still witness to significant increases in property prices, with the average selling price increasing by 10% in just one year (2017-18) as the area's popularity persists (Anon, 2018c).

Porttown has a strong socially rented sector with 10% council-tenure and 13.5% 'other socially rented housing' (primarily housing association tenancies). As Anon (2009) notes, this suggests there exists a core population that has not been displaced by the process of gentrification. However, there is growing anxiety that the 'incomers' and the wider process of gentrification will contribute to the displacement of the 'native' population and the area's identity will be lost. There is concern that this will have

particular ramifications for local young people who wish to remain in the area they have grown up in, but who may be priced out of doing so (*Ibid*).

The process of gentrification is ongoing with a recently proposed development finding local opposition, with concerns raised that the area's cultural heritage is at risk of being terminally lost (Anon, 2018a). It is this heritage that is deemed critical to the area, as Porttown is said to have a unique identity which differentiates it from the rest of the city within which it is situated (Anon, 2018d). Residents who have grown up there proudly identify as 'Porttowners' (Anon, 2018e). Walkerdine and Studdert (2014) talk of working-class communities defending their identity as processes of change sweep over them. The people who have grown up in these communities (and remain) wear this identity with pride and this was certainly the case amongst the young people in this study. As will be discussed, there was real ambivalence about the area but the majority were proud to be identified as Porttowners. The area has a social fabric and identity that Anon (2014b) argues stems from its distinctiveness as the city's port as well as its historic status as an independent burgh until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Anon (1986) notes:

Porttown is different. We know it, and we know it today without any animosity. There is no escaping our heritage, our history, which powerfully influences our attitudes and priorities today. Even for the resident of only a few years the sense of community is strong, so that walking the streets of Porttown is walking among friends. (p196)

However, since the 1970s, changes in shipping requirements and the process of deindustrialisation have hit the area hard and whereas in the past the main source of local employment was through its situation as a port, with industry and warehousing providing the bulk of employment, this has been largely lost (Anon, 2009). The unemployment rate for Porttown (5%) is now higher than the rest of the city (4%) (Anon, 2018b).

As such, situating the study in the area of Porttown was felt to provide an interesting canvas on which to study these processes of change, identity and shifting opportunity structures – their impact on the young people and the practitioners. As will be shown in chapter 6, the young people's attachment to the locality is rooted in the sense of *belonging* they feel for the area, in terms of identity, familiarity and social networks (including family). Despite the lack of opportunity available to the young people, in

terms of finding meaningful work, they were reluctant to look too far abroad in order to find this. Stahl and Habib (2017), in their analysis of local young people growing up in a gentrifying Bermondsey, found that the young people's attachment to the locale was riddled with contradictions - feelings of shame and pride about the area, awareness of the lack of opportunities but wanting to remain and drawing a sense of inclusion from the area whilst simultaneously feeling excluded in a wider sense. They conclude by stating that the young people 'contend with quite complex deficit discourses concerning their neighbourhoods, poverty and marginalization...participants can recognize the area is lacking, but that does not mean they 'belong' any less' (p14). I report similar findings from the interviews with the young people here and the implications in terms of social justice are drawn out and analysed.

Porttown was also selected for more pragmatic reasons. Having previously worked in the community, I have local contacts still engaging with local young people and this assisted greatly in providing access to my study population. Due to my familiarity with the area, I had knowledge of local youth services which gave me greater opportunity to access young people and practitioners for the study. As Bondy (2012) notes, access to research sites is a process of negotiation and prior knowledge of relevant organisations assist greatly in reaching potential participants. It was anticipated that this familiarity would provide me with a good basis from which to start recruiting for the study. I was invited to an inter-agency meeting where all the local services met on a monthly basis to pitch my research and recruit practitioners and young people. It was from this initial meeting that I was able to obtain the majority of my study participants.

## **5.6 The insider/outsider dichotomy**

In order to access participants in person, I volunteered with one of the agencies I was to draw young people and practitioners from. I anticipated that the agency would be key to obtaining the requisite number of participants. Also, as an 'insider' it was important to me that I was able to 'give something back' to the area. As Gupta and Kelly (2014) note, 'we often feel compelled to reciprocate the generosity of those whom we encounter in the field, without necessarily knowing the best way to do so' (p2). The project was short of volunteers and as an experienced youth worker, I felt this would be a way that I could usefully reciprocate their generosity in facilitating my research. It also offered me the

opportunity to meet and work with potential participants prior to interviewing them. This, however, presented an interesting challenge in terms of the ‘insider-outsider’ role of the researcher (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). For the project that I worked with, the young people and practitioners that I recruited for the study became known to me. Prior to conducting the research it was necessary to investigate the pros and cons of the insider/outsider dichotomy to explore the potential challenges of both positions (summarised in table 2). It became apparent during the research that this dichotomy

	Benefits	Challenges
Insider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better Understanding of Group’s culture</li> <li>• Ability to interact more naturally with members</li> <li>• Greater relational intimacy</li> <li>• Greater ‘legitimacy’ with participants</li> <li>• More rapid acceptance from participants</li> <li>• Affords access with potential groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of ‘objectivity’</li> <li>• Making erroneous assumptions based on prior knowledge</li> <li>• Blurring of boundaries between roles</li> <li>• Informants may assume researcher knows answers</li> </ul>
Outsider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater ‘objectivity’</li> <li>• Researcher role clearly defined</li> <li>• Participants will have clearer understanding of researcher role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified by participants as a ‘voyeur’</li> <li>• Difficulty in grasping culture of those investigated</li> <li>• Takes time to break down barriers with interviewees</li> <li>• Takes more time to access potential participants</li> <li>• Impinge on people’s time and space</li> </ul>

**Table 2** – The insider/outsider dichotomy – points drawn from Breen (2007), Dwyer and Buckle (2009), Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) and McNess et al (2015)



was not reflective of the reality of conducting research with young people. Some of those young people whom I met for the first time whilst interviewing were very open about their experiences whilst two of those whom I worked alongside for several months before interviewing were the most 'closed' during the interview. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) note:

...we posit that the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience. (p59)

I agree with this sentiment. What felt most important in this process were my active listening skills, developed as a youth worker, and resisting the urge to interject during interviews (something that developed during the course of the study). One aspect of my insider status that was certainly beneficial was my past experience as a youth worker engaging with marginalised young people. This meant I was able to interact more naturally with the young people and relate to them in a way that perhaps someone without my background may have struggled to. As Gillham (2000) notes, showing genuine interest in the lives and experiences of young people often leads to rich data. My experience throughout this process chimes with what other researchers have found – that young people actively enjoy participating in the research process, reflecting on their experiences and having an interested adult to enter into conversation with about these (Haglund, 2004; Ruiz-Casares, 2013; Urry et al, 2015).

However, it was important to ensure that I was mindful of the challenges highlighted in the literature of being an 'insider.' It was imperative that those young people known to me that they did not brush over episodes of their life that I already knew about from the time I spent with them as a volunteer. The literature also underlined the issue of 'role' and this was something that I had to ensure the young people were aware of during my time with the organisation. As highlighted earlier when discussing the importance of reflexivity this was something I had to balance carefully. Hence, it became crucial when moving into 'researcher' mode before interviews that I emphasised to the young people my purpose and carefully explained the ways in which their data may be used. I did this when going through the process of gaining consent from the young people (discussed later in this chapter). As I was only present for two hours per week as a volunteer with the project I do not think there was much in the way of ambiguity around my role with

the young people. As Adler and Adler (1987) suggest, any distinction between the role of researcher and participant exists 'more strongly in theory than in practice' (p85). I suspect this was the case in my study. But I was careful to emphasise at the outset of interviews that the information they did share would not be divulged to the project. I was aware that the young people might feel reluctant to share any details they felt would prejudice the organisation against them should they suspect I would pass on interview material.

More importantly however, rather than dichotomising between the insider/outsider status, Breen (2007) instead invites us to see the researcher role as a continuum. McNess et al (2015) make the important point that we all have experience of insider status to some degree depending on our personal characteristics – age, gender, status and personal and professional experience, for example. For some of the young people in the study I shared characteristics with them (class, gender, sexuality, country of origin for example), with others less so. As McNess et al argue, we are 'neither complete observers nor complete participants, but often working in that 'third space' in between' (p311). In our role we are always the 'hyphen' in the insider-outsider dichotomy, working in a space of ambiguity. Rather, it is important to pay attention to the tensions that pull on us and that we are reflexive in the way we operate (Kanuha, 2000; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Again, to emphasise, the most important point regarding this issue is that we show empathy, understanding and a deep interest and respect towards our participants and their experiences. It is this I suspect that afforded me the opportunity to gather the rich data the participants provided me with.

### **5.7 The study sample**

The sampling strategy used in this research was purposive (Cohen et al, 2007). As I sought participants who possessed certain characteristics (in terms of age, location, gender, personal characteristics, location of project etc.) this was the best means of obtaining the participants who fit the sought criteria. The characteristics sought of my two 'populations' (young people and practitioners) are now described, addressing the young people first.

### **5.7.1 The young people**

The population for this study was 16-24 year-old young people engaged in a range of youth services in Porttown. This age group was selected as they are defined as 'youth' in Scottish policy, by the OECD, the UN and more generally in academic writing and it is at the age of 25 that individuals qualify for full welfare support in the UK (Scottish Government, 2012a; 2014b, MacDonald, 2009, Woodman and Wyn, 2015).

Narrative research seeks depth over breadth and as a result the sample size is necessarily smaller than other types of research (Squire et al, 2014). I sampled a total of 20 young people, controlling for gender parity. It was felt that due to time constraints it would be difficult to control for other personal characteristics. As other researchers note, contacting and then maintaining contact with young people on the margins of the employment market can be challenging (Simmons et al, 2014). The decision was made to keep the sample as open as possible. However, it was decided that gender parity would be something that I could maintain. As well as this, other research has posited that it is unclear what role gender plays in the post-school experience, if any, as other studies suggest there is some degree of ambiguity around this issue (Silva, 2012; Hills et al, 2015; Frostick et al, 2016). A list of the young people sampled is shown in appendix 3 as defined by age and gender.

All the young people in the study could be characterised as working-class. All had parents with a history of employment in manual or routine non-manual occupations, some were self-employed and many were unemployed, some due to long-term health-related issues. The two exceptions to this are Lana and Maya, both of whom have grown up in middle-class families - Lana with parents in well remunerated professional occupations and Maya whose parents own a number of successful businesses. Despite the similarity in terms of class background, the young people had a wide variety of experience growing up, impacted by issues connected to deprivation, sexuality, discrimination, gender, religion and mental health issues – amongst others. In terms of the interview sample it was interesting and useful to gather this broad range of experience. It is also interesting to note that despite this wide range of personal characteristics that much commonality of experience was shared, a point that will be explored in chapter 6.

Most of the young participants were interviewed once with six requiring a second interview. This was necessary in order to satisfactorily explore their respective experience. Interviews lasted, in total, between 1 hour 15 minutes and 4 hours. Despite initial concerns regarding attrition and literature suggesting that retention of vulnerable young people in short-term qualitative research may be challenging, all follow up interviews that were necessary were conducted (Taylor, 2009; Sanders and Munford, 2017). As the research was primarily interested in the post-school experience of the young people, it was decided that participants had to have left school for a minimum of six months in order to have had sufficient experience of life outside the school environment within which to explore and analyse issues of social justice. As it was, all participants had left school over a year previously. The only other stipulations in terms of participant profile was that they had to 1) reside in the area under scrutiny, in order to provide some consistency in experience and 2) participants had to be engaging with a local service drawn from one of the agencies where a practitioner within the study was employed. This allowed for consistency across the sample and provided a spine through the research, from practitioner to participant and back again.

### **5.7.2 The practitioners**

Practitioners were also drawn from a range of agencies in the Porttown area working with young people who had left secondary school. A total of seven practitioners were selected that had a professional qualification from one of the approved training programmes recognised by the Community Learning and Development Standards Council (CLD, 2016). By targeting these educators I hoped to better explore the tension that exists between (a) an education which analyses the 'features' of youth work discussed in the literature review which are said to underpin the practice, and (b) the current policy agenda. Practitioners were only selected if they currently worked with the age group the study was interested in (the practitioners and the work they currently engage in are listed in appendice 4). The sample size of both practitioners and young people was chosen to fit the limitations and time constraints of the study.

### **5.8 Data analysis**

Data analysis and interpretation are perhaps the most important stage of the entire research process (Kuzmanic, 2009). The analysis of the interview data in this study

necessarily took two forms, given that two means of gathering data are being utilised. However, broadly speaking, there is much similarity in how the data was interrogated as both methods fall into the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative data analysis, Hatch (2002) notes:

...is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what can be learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organising and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorisation, hypothesising, comparison, and pattern finding. (p148)

For the semi-structured interviews conducted with practitioners, analysis was inductive. Data was codified looking for key words and themes which emerged across the participants. As Rapley (2011) notes, this is an iterative practice which requires the researcher to be systematic when interrogating the data. These codes went through a continuous process of reflection and review as they were sorted into themes. These themes were then developed and cross-checked with the data again and form the basis for the sections in chapter 6. It was then in the process of reflection and analysis that their salience in terms of social justice was teased out. Fraser's model was utilised as a lens through which to assess what these themes mean in terms of their ability to work with young people in a way that addresses the issues highlighted in chapter 6.

A similar approach is adopted when conducting narrative thematic analysis, although it requires some additional and alternative strategies. Working with a single interview at a time, the investigator isolates and orders episodes into chronological order to identify the underlying assumptions in the texts (Riessman, 2008). Doing so enables the researcher to draw out the 'narrative thread' (the theme of sections of talk) and name (code) them (Dwyer and emerald, 2017). This was the method used in this study as interviews fluctuated from point to point as the young people moved forward and backward in time as they described their experiences. Effort was made (post-transcription) to put accounts into chronological order before interrogating the data (for an example, see appendice 5 and 6 where I illustrate this process with the interview in its original form and the data after it has been put into chronological order). It is acknowledged that the process of transcription itself means the interviews become decontextualized, abstracted from the social situation within which they arise (Kvale,

2007; Bold, 2012). I have, in part, attempted to overcome this by conveying some of the emotion (and the pauses) in the quotations. Ultimately, there is no 'correct' means of transcribing and presenting data, the task of the researcher is to utilise the best means at their disposal to address the research questions (Cohen et al, 2007). The strength of chronologically ordering the young people's narratives means it is easier to draw out the interplay between structure and agency and the influences at the separate time stages described by the participants. As Kim (2015) argues, narratives are:

...crucial entry points or portals for examining one's lived experience in relation to historical, social and cultural contexts...how individuals' lives are constructed in combination with their interpretations of the social environments where their experiences are embedded. (p126)

Extended excerpts of the young people's accounts are given in chapter 6 to elucidate key points in order to evidence narrative threads that were drawn out in the analysis.

These narrative threads were arrived at through an inductive process of thematic analysis (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003; Silverman, 2011; Dwyer and emerald, 2017). The first stage in this process was the transcription, a process I conducted. Although time-consuming, this was a useful means of getting to know the data intimately and generating immediate critical reflection on the interview material (Silverman, 2011). Again, as with the practitioners, the next step was a circular process of coding and reflection as codes were then developed into categories that emerged from extended excerpts from the chronologically ordered narratives and these were developed into broader narrative themes that appeared across individuals. This process was conducted by coding sections of each interview with labels – these ranged from the descriptive to the conceptual (Silverman, 2011). These were revisited, further scrutinised and revised once all the interviews had been coded (Bryman, 2004). These codes were then developed into broader categories as connections between codes were developed. Categories were then brought together into narrative threads and these are presented in chapter 6. An example of this process from the interview with David is in table 3 on the following page.

<b>Narrative Thread</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Example (quotations)</b>
<b>Aspiration</b>	<b>Future Planning (for and against)</b>	<b>Mental Health (future)</b>	No, I don't feel I could cope in a job at the moment, I'm still struggling with anxiety and depression, something I need to get past a little bit more. Ah need to be at a stage where ah'm not going to bed and hoping that I don't wake up, or feeling sad because I have woken up.
		<b>Hopelessness</b>	I don't feel at the moment that I have a future.
	<b>Conventional Wants</b>	<b>Wants to work</b>	OK, ah want to get to the stage where ah can work, ah want to get a job, ah want to move oot of ma hoose, ah want to start ma own life and live.
		<b>Future Hopes</b>	So, ah'd be living in ma own hoose, ah'd like to live in *****, I think that's a lovely area, it'd be me and ma two friends, living together, working and contributing and that's, what would be a good life. Doing something practical, ah don't care.

**Table 3 - From quote to 'narrative thread'**

As this research project utilises a pre-constructed theory within which to frame the study, the themes were then cross-checked with Fraser's framework in order to ascertain if they corresponded to one of her spheres (identified in figure 1 in chapter 2). It was also essential to pay attention to 'gaps' in Fraser's theory – data that does not fit within the critical framework. As Skeggs (1997) noted in her research:

...there is a continual tension between theoretical generalization and the multitude of differences experienced in practice...noting contradictions and differences helped me to pursue not only the gaps between words and deeds but also to note how many contradictions are held together on a daily basis.  
(p32)

It became clear in the process of analysis that it is necessary to pay attention to the agency of young people as they experience injustice and this is explored in chapter 6. It was only in the process of analysis and reflecting on the data that the notion of 'resistance' was conceived and it was felt important to situate the young people's agency in the study.

## 5.9 Validity, trustworthiness and transferability

As discussed previously, the issue of validity in the interpretive paradigm adopted here discounts the possibility of establishing social 'facts'. Instead, qualitative researchers seek *knowledge* and *understanding* of the nature of the phenomenon studied. Many academics argue that applying positivist criteria of validity, reliability and generalisation is erroneous as the underlying ontology and epistemology of interpretive approaches fundamentally differ (Krefting, 1991; Hammersley, 1992; Sandberg, 2005; Kuzmanic, 2009). Validity in the positivist sense refers to whether an instrument accurately measures the phenomenon being studied and whether it gives a correct or truthful answer (Kirk and Miller, 1986; Kuzmanic, 2009). From a critical constructivist point of view, the social world is in a permanent state of flux and as such, 'it makes no sense to worry about whether our research instruments measure accurately' (Silverman, 2011: 361). Different criteria are required to gauge the quality of the research undertaken.

Rather than validity, many authors argue that it is more appropriate in qualitative methods to ensure that research is credible (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Flick, 2002; Tobin and Begley, 2004). Moisander and Valtonen (2006) argue that two elements are central to achieving this; firstly, by making the research process transparent (from research strategy to data analysis methods) and secondly, by explicitly stating the theoretical stance on which interpretation of data is based. This requires 'rich description' of the path followed by the researcher, a point that Poland (2001) supports; 'researchers should ideally provide sufficient information to allow others to assess the trustworthiness of the data and subsequent interpretations' (p645). Without this, readers are unable to make an informed judgement about the trustworthiness of any claims made on the basis of the research undertaken (Scofield, 2007). Altheide and Johnson (2011) argue that this is absolutely central to the 'validity' of qualitative research:

Qualitative research should provide a window for critical reading, or at the very least, permit an informed reader's queries about what is being read...our position is that any claim for veracity, validity, adequacy, or truthfulness turns on the transparency of these dimensions, and their personal relevance, pertinence, and significance for the audience member. (p588)



This is also essential for displaying 'reliability' – explicitly demonstrating the coherence and logic of the research process – from the ontological and epistemological foundation of the study to the interpretation and presentation of findings. These issues should permeate the entirety of the research process, with a particular focus on elucidating how data was produced and how it was interpreted (Kuzmanic, 2009). I have achieved this here – accounting for the ontological and epistemological thread which runs through this research as well as evidencing and describing the research methods used.

Thick description also allows for the 'transferability' of the knowledge produced (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Generalisation in the positivist sense is normally achieved by statistical sampling and seeks universal applicability unbound by time and space (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). However, this again is inappropriate for interpretive researchers for as Cohen et al (2007) note, 'we never step into the same river twice' (p278). Kvale (2007) makes the point that for qualitative interviewers, 'what matters is not arriving at context-independent general knowledge, but producing well-described situated knowledge from the interviews. The transfer value of this knowledge to other situations may then be critically evaluated by other researchers' (p143). What is being investigated (and offered) is subjective and contextualised information that offers a window for others to draw their own conclusions from (Whittermore et al, 2001). Thick description of research may allow for some degree of transferability between a 'sending context' and a 'receiving context,' which depends on the level of congruence between the two. This again emphasises the requirement of the research to be credible in order that any critical reader of the research will find claims convincing.

### **5.10 Ethics**

This study is aligned with the ethical guidelines set by the ESRC which is funding the research. Ethics are not a 'one-time' event to overcome at the beginning of the research process but an ongoing and daily endeavour that should permeate the entirety of the study (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Hopkins, 2010). As Denzin (1989) notes:

...we must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to us under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared with us. (p83)

Knowledge production brings with it moral responsibility (Ryen, 2011). This is particularly salient for narrative researchers as we hold people's stories in our hands – any failure to treat these with the respect deserved could be damaging (Bar-On, 1996). We must be sensitive to the fact that we interpret and represent these stories in the process of our analysis and they may not be recognisable to participants in the final report (Bold, 2012).

This makes the issue of informed consent important. Participants have a right to know that they are being researched, that they know the nature of the research and have the right to withdraw at any point they choose (Ryen, 2011). Truly informed consent is tricky. As Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) point out participants rarely completely understand the nature of research. We can strive toward it, however, and effort was made to give participants detailed but non-technical information on the purpose of the research (Silverman, 2011: 98). Hopkins (2010) advises that it can be useful to produce a leaflet with this information when working with young people and this was done for this study (appendice 7). Permission from parents/guardians was not necessary as these young people were all 17 and over and competent to give their own consent to participate (Heath et al, 2009). I ensured the consent form was clear, concise and contained no technical or convoluted language and ensured the participants understood the points covered before they ticked each box (appendice 8). Particular effort was made to ensure the young people were informed of how their contributions would be utilised – that their narratives may be shared in presentations and in writing. This was particularly the case for excerpts which I knew could be considered sensitive. As Hammersley and Traianou (2012) acknowledge, we do not want to shy away from presenting troubling and sensitive data as this is often the richest of information. Researchers must balance confidentiality with the aims of research, albeit in as sensitive a manner as possible. An example is the interview conducted with Sue regarding her impoverished state. Sue broke down whilst recounting this period of her life. During and after the interview I made sure to offer comfort and post-interview support as well as ensuring that she was comfortable with my sharing what was clearly painful information. Such care, consideration and respect, I hope, imbued my research.

Extra care regarding the usage of participant contributions had to be taken for two additional reasons. First, as I interviewed staff, care is required that nothing is reported

which will allow respondents to be viewed negatively by employers (Thomas, 2013). I clearly do not wish for any of the staff to have concerns regarding their employment status due to their involvement in this research. Second, regarding the narrative accounts of the young people, these are necessarily detailed and expansive in the final write-up and readers may recognise individuals from their accounts (Chase, 1996). Due care has been undertaken in order to avoid such a situation. Ultimately the responsibility is on the researcher to minimise harm to participants (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012).

This makes the issue of anonymity all the more important for this project. Pseudonyms have been used and codes for identifying participants were used in the storage of data (*Ibid*). Again, extra care has been undertaken here as the research is being conducted and embedded in a specific context. As such, the context has also been anonymised in order to provide an additional layer of protection to participants. The issue of anonymity required a process of ongoing negotiation with research participants to ensure that particular details which may threaten anonymity are scrutinised. This was particularly the case with the practitioners as details pertaining to their workplaces could make it easier for them to be identified. To further 'safeguard' the participants, interview transcripts were returned to them in order for them to read over and highlight anything they were uncomfortable with. All of the participants were happy with the information provided in the interviews.

Every effort was made to carry out this study in a way that did not cause emotional stress to participants or portray them in a negative light. This does not mean that challenging events have not been discussed but attention has been paid to how representations of participants are used in the final write-up (Hopkins, 2010). Respondents were debriefed at the end of interviews, offered the opportunity to ask any questions they had and thanked for their participation. All participants were given a box of chocolates at the end of interviews but did not know they were receiving these until that point. As such, these were not an incentive to participate in the study. Although a small reward for such a generous contribution, I wished to offer a small token for my appreciation in their sharing their time with me.

### 5.11 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and provided the justification for the research process utilised to answer the research questions set out at the beginning of this chapter. Importantly, there is a consistent approach being adopted which threads through the entire study, a critical constructivist ontology and epistemology which brings a consistency of method forming the backbone of the thesis. Fraser's critical theory is the framework which provides the spine to the study. As Fairclough (2009) notes:

There are no 'right answers' to the question of which theoretical perspectives to draw upon: it is a matter of researchers' judgement about which perspectives can provide a rich theorization as a basis for defining coherent objects for critical research which can deepen understanding of the processes at issue, their implications for human well-being and the possibilities for improving well-being. (169)

It is the contention of this study that issues of social justice are best explored utilising critical theory – and narrative research and qualitative interviewing both worked well in combination with critical theory. Crucially, Fraser's framework offered both a complementary lens through which to conduct the analysis of the data collected. Narrative research complements Fraser's critical framework as it allows 'us vivid pictures and deep understandings of people's lives. It lets us grasp some of the complexity, multiplicity and contradiction within lives' (Squire et al, 2014: 77). This is a theme that Fraser (2001; 2003; 2005a) returns to time and again in her writing; that issues of justice in people's lives can be multiple and complex. In order to understand this complexity it is important we give time and space to those who suffer injustice to tell their story. Griffiths and Macleod (2008) draw this point out further when they write:

Narrative research has been presented as a method for giving a stage to the voices of people who traditionally have had not been heard...studies that address the experiences of people at the margins of our education system examine what it is like for those for whom the generalisations generated by other forms of research are unlikely to hold true. Their 'little stories' have the potential to refine the 'bigger picture' drawn by other studies. (p137)

As the literature review revealed, there appears to be a host of potential injustices that young people on the margins may be facing and these cross all three of Fraser's spheres. Therefore, the twin approach described above was well placed to investigate (1) how these justice issues manifested for this group of young people and (2) Fraser's

framework offered a profitable (and complimentary) lens through which to analyse these experiences.

Whilst this study provides insight into the experiences of injustice of a group of young people and the experience of practitioners working alongside them, limitations require to be acknowledged. Given the modest number of interviewees, caution requires to be exercised in terms of generalising from the experiences of both young people and practitioners sampled for this research. This study is highly contextualised and the influence of place can be significant. As Gieryn (2000) so astutely observes, 'place is not merely a setting or backdrop, but an agentic player in the game-a force with detectable and independent effects on social life' (p466). An interesting avenue for further research would involve investigating the experiences of young people in other locales.

Another limitation is the characteristics of this group of young people. As all but one of the participants had poor qualifications upon leaving school and all but two grew up in conditions influenced by material deprivation, the experience of more advantaged young people would be interesting to explore in order to draw comparison. As MacDonald (2011) argues, 'one valid criticism of UK youth transitions research is that it has been over-occupied with the problems faced by those 'at the bottom' rather than with the wide range of youth transitions' (p432). In addition, all but two of the sample are white and issues of injustice pertain to individual characteristics. Depending on the context under scrutiny, some individuals and groups will be:

...denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalised patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them. (Fraser and Honneth, 2003: 29)

As the examples of Divya and Maya will reveal in the following chapter, the issues impacting on different groups by virtue of their specific identity can be profound. Applying Fraser's framework to young people with a different range of characteristics would doubtless draw out a range of intersectional issues and varied impediments to participatory parity than those highlighted in this study.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes valuable insights into the experiences of young people and practitioners working with marginalised youth. Qualitative

research functions as a window to look into a particular socio-historical moment (and context) and these young people's stories provide the basis for a critical analysis of the impact of the structural-institutional framework that circumscribes their lives – and the injustices that flow from this (Squire et al, 2014). It should be noted that the practitioners working with these young people are one component of this. I have drawn on the experience and insights from these practitioners to reveal the challenges that the current policy context provides in terms of addressing the injustices that these young people experience. Ultimately, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, the transferability of any qualitative findings will depend on the level of congruence between this study and any 'receiving' context. At the very least, this research provides findings that should be of interest to anyone interested in the lives of young people, particularly those on the margins of the labour market as well as for practitioners working with young people. Fraser herself is relatively silent on young people so the application of her framework on this group contributes to the expansion of her critical theory.

Allied to this, Fraser's framework is valuable in the analysis of the situation facing the practitioners in this study. The aim here was not to pass judgement on the practitioners. Rather, Fraser's framework is employed to study the current landscape that practitioners must negotiate as they work alongside the young people. The question I set out to answer here concerns the contradictions they face in their practice. If any judgement is being passed, it is on the institutional barriers the practitioners experience and how these do (or do not) allow them to develop a practice that responds to any injustices the young people experience. As discussed in chapter 4, 'starting where young people are at' is, after all, a key feature of youth work as defined in the *National Youth Work Strategy* (Scottish Government, 2014a). The literature suggests that practitioners are currently facing myriad challenges in terms of responding to the immediate concerns of the young people they engage with. Discussing these challenges with the practitioners, this study aims to elucidate the contradictions the practitioners face when engaging with young people and to analyse what this means in terms of responding to the injustices in the young people's lives. It is these that I now turn to. The following chapter explores and analyses the interviews conducted with the young people as they attempt to navigate the choppy waters towards 'full' adulthood.



## **Chapter 6 - Young people: Experience of insecurity and uncertainty**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I present the findings from the interviews conducted with the twenty young people engaged in the study. These interviews are primarily focused on exploring the young people's accounts of their lives in the period since they left school. But of course, some interrogation of their time in school was necessary since this has a significant bearing on their opportunities and pathways upon leaving school. The interviews were conducted in order to focus upon and answer two of the research questions:

1. What are the experiences of this group of young people in their journey from school to adult independence?
2. What social justice issues exist for these young people?

The interview schedules were built around the three categories of Fraser's framework as outlined in figure 1, chapter 2; redistribution, recognition and representation. As I utilised a narrative approach to conduct the interviews, they involved the young people discussing their experiences at length with as little intervention as possible from the interviewer. As the chapter develops I analyse the way in which the three spheres overlap and interpenetrate to cement the marginalisation of the young people, constitute injustice and limit their ability to achieve any semblance of participatory parity.

### **6.2 Redistribution**

The first domain under investigation is the economic – the sphere of redistribution. This sphere was the most dominant in terms of the interview material collected from the young people as their primary concern appeared to be their marginalisation from the labour market – and the reasons behind this. It was apparent in the interviews that the redistributive sub-divisions as described by Fraser (1997a) (and outlined in chapter 2) deprivation, economic marginalisation and exploitation/expropriation, are dominant features of the young people's lives. As this section will reveal, these have all had a



significant impact on the young people's lives and their ability to successfully navigate the school to work transition.

### 6.2.1 Exploitation or expropriation?

The primary concern of every young person within the study was employment and their struggles on the labour market periphery:

**Craig:** 'Cos I want a job like, obviously I want a job for money but I want a job to give me something to do, see sitting in the house all day, you're fucking bored, ah cannae be coping with this. But it's hard no having a job, you cannae buy the things that you want, you know what I mean? You have to rely upon other people...

**Donna:** I want to get a job so quick, 'cos I always want to be active, like, I'm bored, I'm bored constantly, 2 years, well, I just feel that every time ah get an interview...(long pause)...every job I've applied for I've had an interview, just never been employed, never had a job, ah've done loads of voluntary work, I've done 600 hours of voluntary work. I need to make money, it's the money nowadays isn't it? Like, McDonalds, naebody wants to work in McDonalds ken, but ah was gonnae dae that, my Mum gives me money daily, that's how I survive, £4 a day, makes me feel shit though, I'm 18 in two weeks, ken, ah shouldnae be taking money off ma Mum, ah shouldnae...(long pause)...but ah've got tae...

Table 4 shows the labour market careers of all twenty young people in this study. As other studies have found, these young people are trapped in what has been called the 'churn,' largely consisting of short-term, insecure and low-paid work, a variety of training and employability courses, work placements, introductory level college courses and periods of unemployment (Shildrick et al, 2010; Simmons et al, 2014; Fraser et al, 2017). It is important to state that not one of the young people in this study has secured long-term, sustainable and secure employment, but all desired it. It is important to note that the young people in this study are not entirely excluded, given they often have a peripheral place in the labour market. Ainley (2018) argues that rather than being permanently marginalised these young people are part of a reconstituted reserve army of labour:

...youth's marginalisation to a zero-hours, peripheral labour force, intermitted by prolonged stays in the holding pens of full-time education or training, would suggest that young people now contribute a significant part of this reconstituted reserve army, even if only for a period of their lives.  
(p171)

**Table 4 - The Churn**

Name	Age	Working life so far									
Adam	19	Job	Unemployed	Job	Unemployed	Employability course	College	Job (0hrs <sup>14</sup> )			
Amanda	17	Unemployed	Placement (Hair <sup>15</sup> )	Unemployed	Job (tips only)	Unemployed					
Craig	17	Placement (Hair)	Unemployed	Placement (Hair)	Unemployed	Placement (Hair)	Job (Hair)	Unemployed	College (Hair)	Unemployed	Job (Cleaner – 0hrs)
David	20	Unemployed	College (Employability)	Unemployed	College (Employability)	Unemployed					
Divya	23	Unemployed	Volunteering	Job (Temp)	Unemployed						
Donna	18	Employability course	Volunteering	Volunteering	Volunteering						
Ed	19	Placement	Unemployed	Job (Bar – 0hrs)	Unemployed	Job (Bar – 0hrs)	Unemployed	Job (Bar – 0hrs)	Unemployed	Job (Bar – 0hrs)	Unemployed
James	20	Placement (P&D <sup>16</sup> )	Apprenticeship (P&D)	Unemployed	Employability course	Placement (Café)	Unemployed	Job (Waiter)	Job (Café – 0hrs)	Job (Café – 0hrs)	
Katie	17	College (H&B <sup>17</sup> )	Unemployed	Job (Hair)	Unemployed	Job (Hair)	Unemployed				
Kyle	19	Employability course	Volunteering	Volunteering	College	Volunteering	Employability course	Employability course	College		
Lana	23	Employability course	University	Job	Job (6hrs per week)	Volunteering	Job (0hrs)				
Marie	23	College (childcare)	Unemployed	Volunteering							
Martin	24	Unemployed	Training Scheme (CJS <sup>18</sup> )	Job (Admin)							
Maya	23	Unemployed	Volunteering	Job (Temp)	Unemployed						
Megan	18	Work Experience (Hair)	Unemployed	Placement (Hair)	Unemployed	Apprenticeship (Hair)	Job (0hrs)	Unemployed			
Ryan	18	College (Mechanics)	Placement (Garage)	Volunteering	Job (0hrs)	Job (0hrs)	Volunteering	Employability course	Placement	Training Scheme	Job (0hrs)
Scott	18	College	Unemployed	Employability course	Placement	Employability course	Placement	Unemployed	Employability course	Employability course	Volunteering
Simon	21	Unemployed	College	Unemployed	Placement	College	Job (0hrs)				
Sue	19	Employability course	Unemployed	Volunteering	Employability course	Unemployed					
Val	22	Unemployed	Employability course	Unemployed	Employability course	Unemployed	Volunteering	Unemployed			

<sup>14</sup> 0hrs – Zero hours position

<sup>15</sup> Hair – Hairdressing salon

<sup>16</sup> P&D – Painting and decorating

<sup>17</sup> H&B – Hair and Beauty

<sup>18</sup> CJS – Community Job Scotland – CJS is aimed at re-engaging the most marginalised young people into the labour market by creating paid, 6 month positions in third sector organisations. These positions are a minimum of 25 hours per week, pay between £5.90-£7.83/hr depending on age and last for one year.

However, Simmons and Smyth (2016) dispute this claim suggesting that although:

...it is difficult to avoid the Marxist concept of the reserve army of labour to conceptualize the lives of many young people and their relationship with education and work...‘army’ may not be the best way of describing this. Neoliberal regimes, after all, tend to isolate, individualize and demobilize sections of the working class, and fragment what were once collective experiences...whilst shifting risk onto them. (p149)

And to cement the marginalised/excluded distinction, these young people do have citizenship rights (again, not outright exclusion), but most choose not to exercise these rights as will be discussed when this chapter turns to the issue of misrepresentation. The more pernicious impact of the young people’s labour market marginalisation is the potential scarring effect of early labour market marginalisation on future prospects (Bell and Blanchflower, 2010; Selenko and Pils, 2016; Eurofound, 2017). For the older members of the cohort there seems little end in sight for their redistributive marginalisation. The structural impediments to find secure, stable and well-remunerated work constitutes a significant redistributive injustice, limiting the young people’s ability to earn enough money to limit their exposure to poverty and to offer them a vision of a better future.

The consequence of the young people’s marginalisation from employment is that they are engaged in a variety of alternative activities, designed to improve their chances of finding employment. In terms of social justice, it is apparent that for even a modicum of participatory parity to be achieved, they must have the opportunity to build the skills that would allow them to be competitive in the labour market. However, the picture that emerged was that the opportunities available to the young people were of questionable quality in terms of meeting this requirement. Allied to this, their remuneration is minimal – Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA<sup>19</sup>) of £30 per week or the equivalent of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) of approximately £60 per week. And this, often, for the equivalent of full-time working hours of up to 40 hours per week.

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<sup>19</sup> EMA is a fortnightly payment of £60 (£30 per week) paid directly to young people who have reached school leaving age, are aged 16-19, but are either; remaining in school; undertaking a full or part-time non-advanced course, in a college of further education or education centre; or, taking part in activity agreement programme. In order to qualify for this payment, parents or guardians cannot earn more than £24,241 per year with one dependent child or £26,884 with more than one dependent child (before tax). EMA is paid in addition to Child Benefit and other benefits. Young people who receive JSA are not eligible for EMA.

One of the activities through which the sample here experienced maldistribution was in various employability programmes within their community. The participants felt a degree of compulsion to attend these, due to a lack of options, with some feeling that they had to do something to stave off the boredom of doing nothing. Others felt compelled to attend due to the financial struggles that households are enduring as participation in these programmes came with financial incentives. This is not only in terms of EMA and JSA but also due to the conditionality of child benefit, only paid to parents and guardians if young people continue in approved educational programmes within six months after leaving school (Stephens and Blenkinsopp, 2015).

These programmes tended to focus upon building generic skills to enter the labour market, including interview training, writing job applications, developing job search skills, Curriculum Vitae (CV) writing and sending out speculative CVs to employers. James was sent to a private firm that worked with jobseekers by the Job Centre and described his experience:

**James:** I went to...[company]...when I signed on and as I said, when I went there, ah felt like a was just a sheet of paper, like the woman was calling me a different name, you felt like you weren't getting any help, it was just sort of, people just expect young people to know about computers, ah know nothing about computers, ah know about phones, computers, it's always a bit overwhelming when you go, they're no helping, giving me a log-in book which, it was just like, fill out forms, loads of forms, and basically, a lot of like Asda and Tesco, when you were there, they were like, apply for Asda, I didnae want to apply for Asda but at the time ah didnae care, ah would have cleaned toilets, ah just needed money, ah sent like 10 CVs away, for painting and decorating, you go through the whole of the Yellow Pages, then go through Yell.com, online as well, like speculative letters to painting and decorating companies.

Not one of the participants were successful in finding any employment opportunities from their participation on these courses or from utilising these methods to try and find work.

The young people also described doing generic training on these programmes, activities such as team-building, presentation skills and communication skills. However, they were unsure if these would actually have any genuine purchase in the labour market. Scott, for example, had participated on several courses and described his experiences on these:

**Scott:** I done [art-based employability course], [outdoor-based employability course], [art-based employability course]...and then, for the most part I've not really done anything. I done [outdoor-based employability course] for a good chunk of time. I really liked it, they gave you some qualifications there but I don't see how they would help you if you don't do something like that links in with those qualifications, dunno, you know like communication and team-work stuff, SVQ this and that, I dunno, yeah, you know I'm just sitting here right now thinking what have I actually done with my time, absolutely nothing, it's actually quite amazing.

The question is what does this mean in terms of social justice? Simmons and Smyth (2016) make the very good point that focussing on 'soft-skills' is problematic if it is at the expense of specific, focused knowledge and learning that could offer the young people greater opportunity in the labour market. Soft-skills are not without value, however. For young people who have had a disrupted education and find themselves marginalised in terms of employment, learning the initial steps to engage with the labour market has some merit. But as Simmons and Smyth (*Ibid*) go on to say there are only so many times that a CV can be updated, or that interview skills can be polished before more specific knowledge and skill is required. Without meaningful progression there is the inherent danger that young people are unable to gain the necessary skills or qualifications that will enable them to gain a secure foothold in the labour market. This carries with it the very real danger that the participants are unable to gain participatory parity with their more advantaged contemporaries who are able to access education and employment opportunities that carry with them meaningful opportunity to earn and build a stable and secure future. The types of very low-level qualifications that these young people are gaining offer little purchase in an increasingly squeezed labour market, undermining their ability to 'catch up' with their contemporaries with superior educational capital.

Most of these programmes involved a variety of work experience placements and training designed to assist them to become more attractive to prospective employers. These would take on different forms and levels of commitment. Some involved full-time hours, others part-time, with no financial restitution from the employers. Instead the young people received either their social security payment, training allowance or EMA. These programmes were felt to have been largely pointless, with little learning achieved on them. Scott, for example, described his work experience cleaning cars at a national second-hand motor dealership:

**Scott:** After 5 weeks I got a placement at [dealership] car valeting, done that for around 5 weeks and that was at [city location], and that was like up at 6am every morning, starting at 9 making my way there. I had to get the bus every single day, I hated that as well, I felt like the guys there as well, I would go in, we would go in 'cos there was this other guy there as well, he was pretty quiet as well and the guy there would be like, alright, there's a row of cars and he would tell us to clean them but they were absolutely manky and I would be sitting looking at these people that actually worked there and they were getting nice BMWs that were pretty much already clean and we're getting the cars that are absolutely filthy, so a week before it ended, eh I stopped going 'cos I lost my bus ticket and the guys didn't give two shits so I had to walk home from [other side of city] and that took 3 hours so I was like, I'm not going back, fuck that, yeah, never got anything except the money that the agency gave you, but I never got anything. It was like 9-4/5pm every day, Monday to Friday, yeah, it was about £60 [per week] which actually isn't too bad.

Washing cars is not arming Scott with the skills necessary to find a foothold in the labour market. Ryan, likewise, was working in a garage on a placement and was keen to learn car mechanics but found that he was not learning the skills he hoped to in order to move forward in a potential career:

**Ryan:** It was a placement, about 4 months I think, I wasn't really enjoying it in the garage because I was getting like, treated like, not like crap but he was making me tidy up stuff, like his mess in the garage, he was making me tidy his garage like, all the time, sweep the floor, I know it's the basics but I was doing it all the time and I was wanting to get in and do the work, even if it was basics like changing a tyre but he was like he always wanted him, he always wanted to do the job, so I just thought like, I did enjoy it but I actually wanted to...(long pause)...I like, just left, basically 'cos it was, I felt it was pointless, 'cos I was just like in the garage tidying up and I wasn't going to get a certificate for it I was just going to get, next course, join the next course.

For several of the young people they felt that these experiences were akin to 'slavery'. Sue, for example, described an experience where she was scraping paint from an old building for several weeks in order to gain 'work experience':

**Sue:** It was \*sighs\* painting and...\*big intake of breath\*...you know how it has got that astroturf thing, they made us, and I kid you not, right? Scrapers, right, scrape the paint off, like chisel away at the paint, right? For weeks. We were at it right, for weeks and we had two wee heat guns between like, something like 15 people, two wee heat guns to make it bubble and come off easier. It was a nightmare and then they made us paint it. It. Was. Shit. It was like slave labour. Ah ken we were getting 40 quid a week, but ah mean if I was getting paid for that, I'd expect a lot more.

Again, such low-level experience will not allow Sue the opportunity to gain the skills necessary to compete in the labour market and it is clear she is aware of this too. As Roberts (2009) presciently notes, those young people who perform poorly at school are then directed on to post-school courses and schemes which offer qualifications and experience that garner little purchase in an increasingly competitive labour market. Fraser (1996) argues that programmes such as the above are 'notoriously punitive, stigmatizing, and encumbered with strings that violate claimants' autonomy' (p57).

Several of the young women (as well as Craig) in the cohort had participated in the hairdressing sector in varying capacities, either through employability programmes, work experience placements or in short-term employment. These were almost without exception extremely negative experiences. As France and Roberts (2017) note, post-school options remain highly classed as well as gendered. Whilst young women from middle-class backgrounds favour the arts, humanities and health at university, for young women from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds entering vocational training 'they still tend to do traditional 'female' activities such as hairdressing, social care and health, whereas young men do Information and communications technology (ICT) and construction' (p102). Perhaps the most prescient finding was that of the young people who had experience in the hairdressing sector, none had received any actual training and all found themselves being utilised in other areas such as cleaning, greeting customers and serving refreshments to customers:

**Katie:** Aye, I was actually on my hands and knees cleaning the skirting boards and everything, like, washing doon aw the chairs, mopping the floors, cleaning the toilets, mirrors, taking customers jackets, asking if they want refills, if they want biscuits. The only thing ah done was wash hair but ah already knew how to do that, they never taught me it. They actually told me to get on ma hands and knees and clean the skirting boards.

**Craig:** Slave labour, literally slave labour, you go home and your fucking back is breaking you, you've just done 10-8 what is that? 10 hours, 60 hours a week...(long pause)...done that for a year, there were days when I couldnae get oot ma bed, 'cos ah was that shattered and ma back was killing me, still sair, bending over all the time, scrubbing the fucking floor tiles, he used to get us to crazy shit. Used to make us go up on the roof, this wee bit on top of the salon, used to make us climb up there and fix this bit on the ceiling, it was nuts. Used to send us for his lunch, ah'm no a fucking maid, ah'm here to learn no to run after you, if you want a personal assistant go and fucking get one, 'cos ah'm no that. You'd get a 15 minute lunch break if you were lucky. He never trained me, you're lucky if he taught me a blow-dry, for a year, so

when people ask me about being a hairdresser I say dinnae even bother, you're just gonna get used as a skivvy.

For all the participants who had undertaken work, placements or training in the hairdressing sector all appeared to be doing so for very little financial reward – something the young participants complained about throughout the interviews:

**Megan:** Getting £70 a week at [salon], at [another salon] wiz...(long pause)...£50 a week and [another salon] was £2.50 an hour, tell me about it and I was working 7 days a week, 10 hours a day, worst thing I've ever done in my life, I'd work, 3 hours and it wouldnae even cover ma lunch, didnae get holidays, worst company ever and no' being trained, that was why I went to college, 'cos they were just pissing me about, they were just no giving me the right training, like...(long pause)...ah wiz basically doing all the stock checks, just like reception, employing me to deal with bills...

The young people without exception who undertook these experiences wanted the opportunity to learn skills and to gain experience that would offer a tangible route forward and aid them to find meaningful employment. Unfortunately this rarely seems to be the case.

For several of the young people, volunteering has replaced paid work. For those young people in the cohort who had undertaken volunteering, this was as a result of being excluded from paid work. For sure, volunteering 'can be a way of attaining or maintaining moral and professional identities, and even belonging and dignity, in the face of labour market marginality' (Holte, 2018: 11). However, it must be highlighted that volunteering although accruing these benefits, does not provide any income. Kyle highlighted what he felt were the benefits of volunteering for him, to improve his CV and to combat the boredom of unemployment:

**Kyle:** It just keeps you busy and better than sitting at home, sometimes it's good for the CV, most of the time I get a bit bored. I basically just go to the gym and work out and it is something that keeps me healthy and uh...(long pause)...finding a job that's more important for me because...(long pause)...suppose something to do, since March until the end of May, I worked at a place called [sign-making company] a company where they make signs, I had to go to a company, a construction site called...[construction company]...just been volunteering like, a thousand places...

The two companies Kyle was volunteering for were both sizeable organisations that benefited from his free labour. Voluntary work is often presented as a vehicle to enable young people to transition more smoothly into paid employment (Lechner et al, 2016).



However, in the case of the participants here this was not the case. Rather, volunteering is another destination young people on the margins of the labour market visit whilst ‘churning.’ As Simmons et al (2014) note, young people are constructed as not ‘work-ready’ and unable to obtain work as a consequence of their own personal deficits. Within such discourse ‘employers bear the ‘risk’ of taking on workers who are likely to be a burden rather than an asset, for which unpaid labour and subsidies to employers are seen as fair compensation’ (p581). For some young people the experience of volunteering may provide the necessary bridge to paid employment but sweeping generalisations that portray those on the margins as collectively deficit are wide of the mark.

Like many young people across the UK, several of the young people in this study had or were at the time of the interviews engaged in work on zero hour contracts. As discussed in chapter 3 the number of jobs that fall into this category have grown exponentially in Scotland and young, less advantaged people are more likely to experience this type of precarious employment (Scottish Government, 2017a). Although the young people spoke of wanting security and stability, many felt compelled to take on zero hour contract positions in the absence of less precarious work. Ed described some of the difficulties he experienced working in a club on a zero hour contract:

**Ed:** I went to work at...[nightclub]..., hated it, that was a zero hours contract job, walking away with £46 every weekend to live off, I was expected to get to work, eat, clothe myself, done that for 2 months...(long pause)...used to text me my hours the day before, of my shift and tell me to get in. It’d be on a Thursday night or Friday morning and ah’d always be short of time, he’d have me stressed out doing ten jobs at once, cleaning so much, clean up sick, shit toilets, manky crap, all that for £46.60, less than minimum wage, when you work out the hours and money. I had to wait to go to work at 12 o’clock [midnight]...getting ready to go to my bed, no me! Aw wait, ah’ve got work, start at 11 or 12...(long pause)...but, zero hour contract is a fuck about, one minute you can have 10 shifts and then nae shifts, but apparently you’re still working there, how can they class that as working? How could you say to anyone, yes I work but I’m not. I couldn’t afford to eat, couldn’t afford to go out, it felt like slave labour, felt like one of those Chinese bairns that make my jumper, know what ah mean? Ah got sick of it, ah just walked out...

None of the young people in the cohort who had worked in this type of arrangement did or were doing so willingly. It is also interesting to note that Ed made parallels between his own situation and those young people labouring in sweatshops in the Global South.

Although these young people may share the experience of maldistribution, it is the consumer practices of the North that perpetuates the growing numbers of young people (and particularly young women) 'working in export-oriented manufacturing throughout the global South' (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2015b: 45).

For the young people in zero-hour contract positions, all felt compelled to do so due to a lack of genuine choice. For Ed the lack of money was only part of the issue, albeit a very large part. What is also present in the example above is the uncertainty of how many hours he would work each week. The uncertainty and instability that this was causing him was clearly a significant stressor. Zero-hour contracts are posited by advocates as offering increased flexibility for employees in order to fit work round other commitments in life (France and Roberts, 2017). This is far from the reality for the young people in this study who are eager to secure a greater number of hours as well as working conditions that offer more certainty and stability. As Orton (2015) suggests, zero hour contracts 'symbolise a wider concern that the labour market has moved towards more contingent, less secure and more exploitative forms of employment' (p7).

The other point raised by Ed and also a direct consequence of zero hour contracts is the difficulty in planning life outside work. Several of the young people discussed the impact of the variability of the hours that the precarious labour they were exposed to had on their lives. For example, many of the young people craved the certainty of regular and patterned hours which would enable them to plan their lives:

**Adam:** So you've got stuff to do in your life if you have a more sustainable job, and if you ken that you're gonna be at work, 7 in the morning until, say 5 at night, you know you can make a routine...[...]...but if you're working a zero hour contract job. With this job that ah've got it's sometimes 10 in the morning until 4 and then sometimes a split shift and go back to work at 6, what ah'm a meant to dae with masel? Who want to be daein that, you've no got a life. Ah understand if you've nae pals, then you can dae that! \*laughs\*...

**Lana:** ...given I've worked weekends for years, it's kind of just what I expect now, so it doesn't really matter anymore, if I was offered a job that involved weekends, it wouldn't put me off. But I do quite like having at least one day where I know I'm off so I can make plans. I don't think that's a 'young people' thing, I'm just a bit of a control freak...

As Woodman (2013) finds, 'desynchronisation of the schedules and rhythms of their lives with those of significant others appears to be one impact of current labour market structures' (p425). This is an issue Fraser (1996) discusses in terms of redistributive

justice - material inequality does not only manifest in terms of finance but also in terms of leisure time. In the example of Adam and Lana above, their situations compromise the objective precondition of participatory parity in two ways. Firstly, in terms of their material deprivation and susceptibility to expropriation. Secondly, their inability to lead a life in which they can choose to share time with those close to them. As Fraser (*Ibid*) argues, 'society must not institutionalize great disparities in leisure time. When some people, but not others, must work a double shift, for example, the former lack equal opportunities to participate in social life' (p54). For the young people affected by irregular work patterns, all discussed the negative impact of such arrangements on mental health. This is something also identified by Eurofound (2017) who describe irregular work patterns as a *buffer* and a *trap* – a buffer as it can mitigate against exclusion through social isolation by connecting young people to new social networks; a trap as it can, as is the case here, lead to young people spending less time with significant others.

For others the issue associated with time was one of boredom. Having no job or educational activity often meant prolonged periods of doing very little. This was particularly an issue for the three young mum's in the study who all spoke of boredom and isolation:

**Val:** Well, my friends are working and...[friend]...has got her two bairns running aboot after them and ah dinnae real talk that much to her anymore. Like obviously my other friends dinnae have bairns and they've got jobs and they have partners and stuff. When there was the pub opposite mine I did get out now and then, even taking the dog out I used to sometimes pop into the pub with him...(long pause)...just to see people...(long pause)...I suppose I get peace and quiet but then there's no-one to talk to...

Like Val, Sue describes the feeling of social isolation she has experienced due to a lack of money, as her friends were able to take advantage of leisure time by going shopping or for a cup of coffee:

**Sue:** We never had any money. Went to ma Mum's, that's all I could do...(long pause)...shite...\*resigned laugh\*....just never did anything. It was a really fucking shitty time...(long pause)...ah never done anything, if I did anything it was just seeing family, never seen pals, 'cos I couldnae afford, 'cos if they were like 'we're going shopping, do you want to come?' a wiz like 'naw, am no going to walk into a shop and not buy anything', or, 'I'm gaun tae Starbucks, want to come?' No, 'I'll buy you something'...(long pause)...no, am no charity, am not a charity case, am no coming', end of...(long pause)...

Here we have the combination of social stigma as well as disposable income which would enable Sue to spend time with friends. Simon discussed this too:

**Simon:** Lie in bed until 11, get up, showered, get something to eat...eat and watch telly, eat, have a fag, smoke, eat, smoke, eat, go on Xbox, go to the gym, back hame, bed. That's it. Eeeveevery day...\*sighs\*...money is what makes you happy. Got nae money you're pure drained, struggling, depressed, bored. You cannae do anything with yer pals, they go out partying and to festivals or going out up town.

Ruddy (2018) reports similar findings in his study of young marginalised people in Teesside as boredom, isolation and the feelings of being 'stuck' were common. This very much chimes with the sample in this study. As Furlong et al (2011) write, the challenge:

...of synchronizing lives is also the basis for one of the ways that inequality is being reshaped...overlapping free time with significant others is one of the major sites where young people find the resources to build and reinforce narratives about their future, engage with and shape contemporary cultural forms, and receive support to cope with the challenges they face in managing complex lives. (p364)

This is an interesting manifestation of maldistribution and one that was evident amongst the cohort here.

Trying to unpick the justice issues within the young people's labour market marginalisation is complex. Given the lack of options available to them they are ripe for expropriation, suffering maldistribution and at severe risk of being unable to develop a path to escape their predicament. It is worth quoting Fraser (2016b) at length here, as she seeks to build on Marx's account of exploitation and expropriation:

In financialized capitalism, accordingly, we encounter a new entwinement of exploitation and expropriation - and a new logic of political subjectivation. In place of the earlier, sharp divide between expropriable subjects and exploitable citizen-workers, there appears a continuum. At one end lies the growing mass of defenseless expropriable subjects; at the other, the dwindling ranks of protected exploited citizen-workers. At the center sits a figure, already glimpsed in the previous era, but now generalized: the expropriable-and-exploitable citizen-worker, formally free but acutely vulnerable. No longer restricted to peripheral populations and racial minorities, this hybrid figure is becoming the norm in much of the historic core. (p176)

For Fraser, then, there is a clear development in this latest incarnation of capitalism and the nature of work is at the heart of it. Whilst the dwindling ranks of the old proletariat

enjoy(ed) a modicum of labour protection, the new precariat is acutely more vulnerable to the sorts of arrangements we see with the young people in this study (Fraser, 2016c).

Although Fraser is addressing the issue of race (with a particular focus on the United States) an argument can be made that the young people in this study also fit the definition of expropriable workers. Importantly for Fraser the difference between expropriation and exploitation is not only in terms of rights in the workplace (redistribution) but also in terms of the cultural order (recognition) and political subjectification (representation). This is the most important point to take from this chapter and one that will be returned to at the conclusion. These young people are expropriable precisely because they suffer misrecognition (that they are scroungers etc. and because of their age they do not have the same rights as their older contemporaries) and because they lack political power and are therefore unable to effectively articulate their voice, points that will be developed as the chapter progresses. Fraser (2016b) explains:

In capitalist society, as Marx insisted, exploited workers have the legal status of free individuals, authorized to sell their labor power in return for wages; once separated from the means of production and proletarianized, they are protected, at least in theory, from (further) expropriation. In this respect, their status differs sharply from those whose labor, property, and/or persons are still subject to confiscation on the part of capital; far from enjoying protection, the latter populations are defenseless, fair game for expropriation - again and again. (p169)

These young people are suffering expropriation, rather than 'mere' exploitation. Due to the entwinement of maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation they are vulnerable to just such a state of affairs –and due to their lack of meaningful progression, they are susceptible to continued labour market marginalisation and the type of arrangement which leads to their expropriation. Rather than receiving anything like a fair exchange for their labour, the young people in this study are compelled to undertake work for the most minimal of remuneration (Fraser, 2016c; 2018). And this state of affairs is posited as 'for their own good' in order to develop a CV which will give them a foothold in the labour market when the reality is some way off that. They are at the mercy of the churn and their economic marginalisation and subsequent maldistribution looks set to continue.

### 6.2.2 Economic Marginalisation

It is critical to highlight that these young people's economic marginalisation is not a new experience suddenly thrust upon them in their post-school years. The interviews began by discussing the early lives of the participants and their experiences growing up. It was apparent from the interviews that for the majority, economic hardship was an experience they had to endure during their formative years. Only two of the participants (Lana and Maya) discussed their families not having to make sacrifices so that the children in the family did not have to go without some of the 'necessities of life', such as clothing, shoes or adequate food and warmth (Fahmy, 2018). Similar to other research findings (Shildrick et al, 2012a), the interviewees were reluctant to explicitly state that they had experienced, or were living in, poverty, but discussed 'struggles' their families had to endure during their early years:

**Katie:** Mum is disabled and ma Dad is disabled as well. Mum's got arthritis and she fell one day and it aggravated it so now she is on crutches, been on them for 5 years and my Dad has agoraphobia, he never used to be like that, been over 10 years...my Mum and Dad always made sure there was money for shopping and school and stuff like that, we struggled sometimes, but even if they had to borrow money off family or something they made sure we still had money...Mum always made sure there was a full shop, in the fridge and in the cupboard and stuff, because ah was from the...[area of multiple deprivation]...they were all, like, in the same situation, so, used to get the odd person saying something, we'd just batter them or something...\*laughs\*... they try, but both of them are on benefits, so it's hard, they just make sure there's food and stuff in the house, and if I ask for a couple of pounds, like for bus fares or something like that, they'll maybe gie me it.

It is well established that early exposure to material deprivation is linked to poorer outcomes for young people, in terms of their future educational performance and subsequent occupational opportunity and success (Kiernan and Mensah, 2011; Social Mobility Commission, 2017; Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea, 2017). For the majority of participants in the study, family 'struggles' were linked to wider issues such as parental ill health, domestic violence, growing up in lone parent households, parental addiction issues and family breakdown. For the majority these compounded issues meant that parent(s) were unable to work and were reliant on social security. For some, like Katie, this resulted in life being a constant struggle and extended family were often a source of financial support to 'plug the gaps' in stretched household budgets.

Such was the level of deprivation in some of the accounts that the theme of parents, particularly mothers, sacrificing their own needs and requirements in order that the young people had adequate food and clothing was common. Donna and James describe the struggle that their mothers endure(d) in order to provide for family:

**Donna:** Both parents are ill, ma Mum, cannae work, she cannae walk, she has got liver and bowel problems, she's going for a liver transplant, ma Dad's mentally ill, he lost both parents not that long ago, he lost his Mum and Dad right after, then he lost his Auntie last year, right after that too, so he's like mentally depressed, my Mum's always made sure, she'll walk about in the shittest of gear just to make us look good, aye, she'll no buy nothing for hersel' she'd rather, ma Mum and Dad go without just to make sure us 5 are daein better, ma Mum pushes and shoves to get her bairns into good stuff, she pushes and pushes, she goes into debt but she can afford to pay for it. Naebody can afford to pay for 5 bairns at Christmas, like ma Mum has got to get a wee bit of help, gets a loan oot and pays it until September then she'll get a loan oot from September until next Christmas....

**Adam:** My Mum does better without my Dad, he's addicted to drugs, so it was better for ma Mum to no' be wi' him, she didnae want us growing up in that environment, she doesnae do anything at all, he takes heroin, crack and whatever else. Aye, ah dinnae like ma Dad...(long pause)...ma Mum never let us see anything, ma Mum, when he was in jail, she went to the jail and said, you're in here, so ah'm taking the house, took the lease in and she said you're signing it over so it's just ma house, so he signed it over...[...]...ma Mum has a job, it's not sustainable how much she has to pay for aw these things, 'cos ah've got a job, ma brother's got a job, we pay the rent, we gie her digs, nothing compared to what she has to pay to keep the house...[...]...ma Mum always made sure we were first, she would go without, to make sure we had...(long pause)...if she didnae have enough money for a shop, she'd always make sure we had enough before her, we were always eating before her, so she would go without food, sometimes for 2 or 3 days, so we could eat.

As with others in the study, mothers often 'go without' in order to ensure that their children have the clothes and signifiers of a 'normal' household (Patrick, 2016). And this includes the basic necessities of life. Donna's parents appear to be in a permanent state of debt in order to provide what they see as adequate Christmas gifts for their children. As Lister (2015) notes families in poverty will often sacrifice essentials in order to 'keep up appearances' and 'to appear normal' in order to manage the shame associated with poverty.

Fraser (1996) makes the point that such social arrangements constitute a grave injustice, as redistributive inequality limits the ability of young people to achieve participatory parity with their better-off peers. This is what she calls:

...the “objective” precondition of participatory parity. It precludes forms and levels of material inequality and economic dependence that impede parity of participation. Precluded, therefore, are social arrangements that institutionalize deprivation, exploitation, and gross disparities in wealth, income, and leisure time, thereby denying some people the means and opportunities to interact with others as peers. (p30-1)

For the participants, the consequences of deprivation were bound up with parents coping with the effects of illness, marital breakdown, bereavement and the impact of constant financial struggle – all linked to and impacting upon poor educational outcomes for young people growing up in these circumstances (McCluskey, 2017; Mowat, 2017). Kiernan and Mensah (2011) pose the difficult question that has yet to be conclusively answered in the academic literature:

...is it lack of income or capabilities that reduces the chances of some parents engaging in cognitively enhancing activities or does poverty lead to family stresses that inhibit positive parenting or are both working together? (p329)

Whatever the reason, there is little doubt that material hardship in childhood and youth does have a negative impact on life chances, particularly in the area of education which is of critical importance in terms of opening up opportunities for young people at the end of their time in school (Johnstonbaugh, 2018). This is a concern for a significant number of young people in Scotland, with around 19% of children currently said to be growing up in relative poverty (Scottish Government, 2017a).

McCluskey (2017) highlights the importance of educational inequality, with young people with greater capital able to access:

...high quality, leading edge digital technology, the employment of private tutors to give additional support in preparation for the national exams which give access to higher education, purchase of expensive school trips which bring a range of tangible and intangible benefits, or by ensuring participation in after-school and extra-curricular activities which can enhance confidence and skills, but which may require expensive equipment or time not always available to children living in poor families. (p27-28)

Only Lana reported having access to such advantages and was able to capitalise on these and progress to university. If young people like those in this study are at such a distinct



disadvantage in comparison to their better-resourced peers, then surely such inequality undermines any claim to genuine equality of opportunity? Fraser (1996) argues that in order for young people to achieve participatory parity, they must live in a society:

...that does not institutionalize great disparities in wealth and income; although some such disparities are inevitable and unobjectionable, they must not be so great as to constitute “two nations,” undermine equal standing, and create second-class citizens. (p54)

Hence, if young marginalised people such as those identified here are unable to fully engage with the opportunities afforded them in school due to the consequences of class, inequality, deprivation and its associated characteristics then it must be called an injustice (Furlong and Cartmel, 2009; Francis et al, 2017). Mowat (2017) states, ‘schools cannot be expected to address inequities in educational outcome without addressing structural inequalities’ (p17). But equal opportunity is largely premised on the availability of and access to educational provision (Alexiadou, 2017; Scott, 2017). For Pichaud (2008) inequalities in life chances substantially reflect inequalities that develop before and during children and young people’s time in education. This is particularly the case when we consider the growing evidence of scarring that such experiences and early labour market disadvantage has on the future life chances of young people (Blanden and Macmillan, 2016). It is apparent that the young people in this study are some distance away from participating equally in any meritocratic competition due to these early experiences of deprivation (Fraser, 2005b). Hartas (2012) summarises this dilemma well:

Socio-economic inequality functions as both a cause and effect and shapes the relationship between home learning and school outcomes: it makes the field, i.e., educational resources and institutions, unattainable, which in turn poses obstacles to parents and their children in generating bridging forms of cultural capital to access educational opportunities. (p877)

Without addressing the great disparities in wealth, it is apparent that young people like those in this study will be at a significant disadvantage in their ability to achieve participatory parity in the educational sphere.

Importantly, deprivation was not simply something of the past as the majority of participants discussed the impact of having little money in the here-and-now. Marie, for example, is one of the young mothers in the cohort and was forced to leave her college

course due to the overwhelming stress caused by her experience of deprivation. Unable to meet rent payments, she fell into debt:

**Marie:** Aye, like every time I've planned something, something has come up ...\*laughs\*...went into rent arrears ah wiz just focused on that and ah've had to gie the course up because ah had too much on ma mind and ah was overthinking things and, obviously ah do want to do that but I'm trying to get masel' oot eh like a financial situation that has to be resolved first and ah think ah just never had the time to, like i'd sit doon and i'd be fine and then aw of a sudden I'd be oh like, rent arrears, will we still be here, will we still be able to do that...(long pause)...stress and ah wis just no, paying £50 back a month, it was too much to think aboot and it was in the back of ma mind.

For Marie, her indebtedness resulted in withdrawing from her college course and forced an interruption in her education. Again, from a position of participatory parity such a situation clearly constitutes an injustice. Marie's partner was in precarious employment with intermittent periods of unemployment and they often relied solely on social security payments which saw them suffering genuine hardship. Marie spoke of wishing to better her situation in order that she could earn enough money to support her young family and to set a good example for her children.

Like Marie, Sue and her partner were struggling on social security with a new baby. Sue described her current life situation as one of 'barely surviving':

**Sue:** Just nae money. At all. Nothing. After food, TV license, bills and all that. Ah know we dinnae have to have telly as I was saying earlier I had everything as a bairn, so I got used to that, if you're on benefits you shouldn't have luxuries, that's what they think, they don't give you enough money to have luxuries. I see the TV as more of a necessity, got to have a telly...(long pause)...have to pay your TV license and...(long pause)...having to get used to buying food, gas and electric and all that, even that, when I got used to it I dinnae have any money, like in the, emergency gas and electric all the time, always having to borrow money, from ma Nana and Mum, just shit, cannae go and buy masel' a pair of socks, as stupid as it sounds, cannae afford a pair of socks, just horrible, or a pair of pants.

For Sue, we can also begin to detect misrecognition in the form of questions of 'desert' – should someone on social security have access to a television? Such arguments have long concerned writers and academics researching issues of social exclusion (Townsend, 1979; van Oorschot, 2000). Sue is aware of the discourse surrounding those in receipt of social security, something that will be discussed in more detail later in the

chapter. Fraser (1996) stresses the point throughout her writing that with the receipt of welfare comes an added dose of misrecognition:

Welfare states distribute material benefits, to be sure, but in doing so, they also institutionalize cultural norms of entitlement and desert; and they construct various distinct (and often unequally valued) subject positions or identities for their claimants and beneficiaries...the welfare state is a key point of imbrication of economy and culture, redistribution and recognition. (p55)

The injustice for Sue is twofold – first, that the amount of money provided by the state is insufficient to prevent her experiencing material hardship. Secondly, being in receipt of welfare has lead Sue to the point where she feels stigmatised.

### **6.2.3 Poor school experience**

The participants provided various explanations for their negative experience at school; issues in their life outside school were too demanding; school and the attainment of qualifications were irrelevant; being bullied and it not being dealt with appropriately; feeling unsupported by teachers and the wider school; teaching styles that were unable to appropriately and successfully engage them. As the respondent below states:

**David:** My Mum was struggling when we were growing up she wouldn't let us know, she would act like everything was fine, didn't tell us, she'd borrow money and pay it back when she got paid and just...(long pause)...a cycle pretty much...(long pause)...ah got picked on for it when ah was in primary school and high school ah was always getting, bullied and, no-one was really ever nice to me...(long pause)...it went through the whole of secondary and, primary school...(long pause)...wasn't easy to deal with, em, it was a lot of, bad attendance, because ah just didn't want to go in, I would find any excuse, reason, not to go in, eh, ah dinnae usually gie it a thought, try and leave it behind, ah dinnae usually...\*voice faltering\*...it's...(long pause)...it's weird trying to think about it, ah cannae remember much...\*voice faltering\*... because there's things about the human mind, blocking out stuff that you don't want to remember...(long pause)...people and stuff like that...

It was clear that, for David, the bullying he suffered during his time at school had profoundly affected him and his educational experience. Due to it and his feeling of helplessness he had attempted suicide and still suffered from anxiety and depression for which he was receiving counselling. For most of the young people interviewed, their 'unofficial' school leaving date was well before 16, with most effectively leaving around the age of 14. They described very little effort from schools to re-engage them, despite

the threat and availability of an attendance order or the intervention of a Social Worker or referral to the Children's Reporter, potentially compelling parents to ensure their children attend school. Not one of the interviewees were aware of any of these measures being used with their parents. Scott described his attendance in the final year of his schooling:

**Scott:** I think it was around 15%, if that. I'd say the first year it was around 50% but, obviously it was the first year so I did go quite often, but, as the years went on it just slowly dropped. Ah mean, my guidance teacher and that, they would talk to me you know, they would...(long pause)...they never really did anything to be honest, like if they did really help me, if they did help me, if they tried to get me back in ah probably would have made an effort but I didn't think they really made an effort so, yeah, they would just tell me to come in and that wasn't really enough, so...(long pause)...

The impact of school on the post-school pathway of these young people is extremely significant. It has been the case in the UK for some time that those young people who leave school at the earliest opportunity face social exclusion (Furlong, 2006; Heinz, 2009; Scottish Government, 2017a). As Cook (2013) notes, those with no or few qualifications have 'become systemically less likely to be employed over time' (p13). Given the well documented link between poverty and underachievement in education in Scotland, these young people are not able to start from a 'level playing field' with their better-off peers due to issues connected with deprivation and this is being further cemented in school. In terms of injustice, their earlier years have been skewed by maldistribution and this is having the knock-on effect in terms of their ability to 'catch-up' at school. Instead, the 'justice gap' enlarges at school with deprivation and inequality impacting on these young people's ability to achieve participatory parity before and during their time in education. With research suggesting a 'scarring' effect of the impact of poor qualifications, it seems that the justice gap persists post-education too, widening again if these young people continue in the 'churn' into their 30s whilst their more advantaged peers are better placed to obtain stable and well-remunerated positions which offer a secure future (Chauvel, 2010; Ralston et al, 2016).

Many participants cited their dyslexia as providing a significant barrier in their struggle to obtain qualifications at school:

**Ryan:** ...'cos I've got dyslexia, like, felt like work was quite hard and school, so I used to muck about just to take away from it, basically I was class clown

so I could hide that so they wouldnae laugh at me for getting like, slagging me and stuff for being stupid, so teachers kinda like, had a thing for me, it was kinda my own fault as well for not like, speaking up and saying I need help, 'cos I would just act like an idiot basically, but the dyslexia never got diagnosed until about second year but it wisnae really a thing, they wurnae really bothered, that's why I didn't like it and I just left.

**Megan:** Ah've got extreme dyslexia so ah cannae like, stuff, written stuff masel' and they were making me dae it masel' and, cannae, really like, written work ah cannae dae that, they were absolutely rubbish, ma brother supported me mair than they, ah cannae read well with a computer and that, ah need a peach overlay as well.

Ryan and Megan, like other young people in the cohort, did not feel their additional support needs (ASN) were adequately addressed at school. The participants reported becoming disruptive in class, falling behind their peers in terms of their work and in several cases, self-excluding and avoiding school altogether. As Riddell and Weedon (2017) suggests in her study of ASN in Scotland:

With regard to the politics of redistribution, it is evident that the educational outcomes of children with ASN are strongly associated with their social-class background. Compared with their more affluent peers, children living in more deprived neighbourhoods are more likely to be identified as having ASN but less likely to receive CSPs<sup>20</sup>, which provide some guarantee of additional resources. (p46)

Riddell and Weedon (*Ibid*) go on to argue that those young people with ASN from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to suffer misrecognition and misrepresentation too, as the family are less likely to have the associated social and cultural capital to engage with professionals and are less able to influence decision-making with regards to the young people involved. For all of the participants in the cohort who have dyslexia, they felt that very little effort was made to work with them to ameliorate its effects on their academic work. The effect of this was to compound the impression that school was not interested in them and as a consequence, cement their exclusion from the school environment. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) stipulates that local authorities must make adequate provision to meet the young people's requirement for additional support but it was not experienced here. The Act also states that the views of the young person must be taken into consideration within this. From the perspectives of the interviewees, provision was not made and

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<sup>20</sup> Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) - an education plan prepared for children and young people with additional support needs of which the local authority is legally obliged to adhere to.

their views were not taken into consideration. An argument can be made here that we have an example of representation (views ignored), recognition (labelled as educationally incompetent) and redistribution (a lack of resources) intersecting.

The final redistributive theme that emerged was of the young people being directed by school towards gendered vocational learning on various training programmes and college courses. Respondents described being encouraged by schools towards manual learning, with the boys favouring bricklaying, painting and decorating and other 'trade' industries, whereas the young women were pointed towards childcare, hairdressing and courses associated with the beauty industry. For several, this experience occurred whilst at school, as part of the school curriculum meant the young people could pick a college course as part of their timetable. This saw them at the local college on these types of gendered courses that also encompassed employability skills, vocational training and included a work placement to contribute towards either a National 4 or National 5 qualification:

**Val:** Never really spoke to teachers, I was always late and no daein ma homework so they didnae like me, forced me into going to childcare at the college, probably just to keep me doing something...(long pause)...they put me into it and I didnae even want to go into it, didnae choose it...(long pause)...had to go every Thursday afternoon and then ah had to dae ma work thing...that was about two years ah haud tae go fur, childcare at college, aye and the college put me on to the work placement at my sisters nursery, it was crap, never learnt anything frae it.

Of course, whilst these types of courses may engage young people who find the school environment uninspiring, Thomson and Russell (2009) suggest that labelling these young people as 'good with their hands, not with their heads' runs the risk of perpetuating stereotypes of young people who have had poor school experiences as unacademic and limits the choices available to them. Simmons and Thompson (2011) make the very good point that:

...such discourses operate with an undifferentiated notion of construct such as 'practical' and 'academic', placing basic skills and work-related learning in opposition to an academic curriculum and ultimately failing to confront wider issues concerning the relationship between young people, education and work. (p126)

In terms of social justice the problem arises when we consider the strong correlation between academic achievement and social advantage and the, as yet, complete failure to

address the perceived second-class status attached to vocational education (Smyth et al, 2009; Smyth, 2012). Rather, the risk appears to be that what these young people are being set up for is life in the churn or 'education without jobs' (Ainley and Allen, 2010; Ainley, 2013; Simmons et al, 2014; Fraser et al, 2017). The reproduction of such gendered and classed pathways does little to challenge existing patterns of social reproduction. France (2016), for example, writes that current evidence suggests that there are three times more young woman aged 16-24 in low-paid occupations in the UK (a jump from 7% to 21%) than there were 20 years ago. If the limit of ambition for the young woman in this study is to direct them towards the precarious and low-paid domains of childcare, hairdressing and the beauty industry then it remains to be seen how such social reproduction will be impeded. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with these professions but in terms of social justice, these young people are being guided towards non-academic routes which limit their future earning power, employment opportunities and choices. In turn, their ability to achieve parity with contemporaries who are offered the guidance and opportunity to attend Higher Education institutions is compromised.

### **6.3 Recognition**

The second domain under investigation is that of recognition. This domain was the second most dominant in terms of the interview material collected from the young people. It's important again at this point to emphasise that Fraser's (2007) conceptualisation of recognition is centred on her 'status model' which she contrasts with Honneth's concern for self-realisation; 'critical theory must prioritize the critique of institutionalized injustice in order to open a space for legitimate forms of self-realization' (p326). Rather than placing the focus on subjective, interpersonal psychology, Fraser (Fraser and Naples, 2004) encourages our critical spotlight to be placed upon the institutional hierarchies of cultural value that regulate social interaction. She argues that as critical theorists our attention should be paid to how cultural norms are institutionalised and then set the stage for parity (or not) in social participation. It is also important to note that Fraser's (2011) conceptualisation of institutions moves beyond the formal structures of society to also focus upon the informal; 'market processes, family forms, professional cultures, communicative constructions, and/or informal practices in civil society' (p73). The informal power

asymmetries that permeate society can be obstacles to parity of participation just as much as those juridified in law. As this section will reveal, this is important in terms of the young people's experience of misrecognition.

### 6.3.1 Structure and agency

The first theme to emerge from the data related to the interplay between structure and agency. It is evident that there is no lack of agency on the part of the young people in the study. Interplay between the spheres of redistribution and recognition is present when we consider the labelling of young people in the churn. Popular stereotypes of young people on the labour market periphery positions them as lazy, idle and feckless (France and Threadgold, 2016; Simmons and Smyth, 2016). Dunn (2010), for example, argues that many unemployed benefit claimants are 'choosy' about the employment they are willing to take on, preferring to remain idle rather than engage in work they see as unpleasant or inconvenient. For the most part, this is not the case amongst the young people in this study. The majority of participants were willing to do any kind of work in order to earn money. This was a point that arose repeatedly in the interviews, unprompted. It is clear that the discourse surrounding young unemployed people as scroungers and skivers was keenly felt (Francombe-Webb and Silk, 2016). Craig, discussing these labels and his efforts to find work stated that:

**Craig:** ...naebody would say that to me, 'cos ah'm oot 4 times a week handing CVs oot, here on a Tuesday, ah see ma careers advisor on a Tuesday after ah've been here, ah'm always applying for jobs online, been up till 3 in the morning applying for jobs, ah'm no just sitting about living the fucking life, ah'm actually looking for a job, ken what ah mean? Applying for the army and that, seriously, applying for anything, as a cleaner, what else is there? But you have to apply for it – it's a job, it's money, it's something tae dae, ah've been greeting. I need a job and ah'm so sick of sitting aboot. Makes you feel shit. Folk say you should feel alright, you can just lie aboot in your bed till whatever time.' It's no. You need something that's a stability, you need something worth living for, or there's no point of living if you've not got anything to dae. Just sit about aw day, it's depressing.

At the time of the interview Craig was employed in a zero-hour contract cleaning at the airport, a job which also involved substantial travel. As Marston (2013) argues, 'mono-causal explanations of complex problems like unemployment are simply implausible' (p822). In other words, positions that seek to focus on the personal responsibility of



job-seekers without acknowledgement of the multiple structural barriers that young people such as Craig and others in the study face are doomed to fall wide of the mark.

This is also the case with others such as Simon and Donna who attend the local youth centre 'job club' but were lacking in motivation to look for and apply for jobs. Again, however, to argue that their predicament was of a lack of agency on their part would be to miss the structural issues which have played a large part in their *discouragement* (Eurofound, 2012). I asked Simon to tell me about his life at the moment and his hopes for the future:

**Simon:** ...ah'm a lazy bastard, ah dinnae look for jobs, ah mean ah did look when ah left school and that, but now...(long pause)...just tired, cannae sleep. Ah dunno what's wrong with me, what the fuck?...(long pause)...getting a job and that, ah don't even know myself...\*laughs\*...nut, nothing really. Lie in bed until 11, get up, shower, get something to eat, eat and watch telly, eat, have a fag, smoke, eat, smoke, eat, go on Xbox, go to the gym, bed. That's it. Every day...\*sighs\*...(long pause)...

For Simon, repeated negative experiences in attempting to move forward had led to him struggling with depression and to his feelings of hopelessness. To suggest that Simon's struggles are one only of his own 'choosiness' or lack of agency would miss the structural issues (primarily, a lack of opportunity in the labour market) that are creating impediments to his moving forward. For those that did leave temporary jobs or work placements (such as Scott and Craig, earlier) it was clear they did so due to the positions offering little purposeful work or work that offered some form of training that would prove advantageous in the future. Again, it is crucial to highlight the structural issues that are leading to these decisions.

Likewise, Donna described struggling to survive on social security as she was desperately seeking a job:

**Donna:** Ah need to make money, it's the money nowadays isn't it? 'cos you cannae get nothing for free. Like, McDonalds, naebody wants to work in McDonalds ken, but ah was gonnae dae that. Ma Mum gives me money, that's how I survive, £4 a day, makes me feel shit though, I'm 18 in two weeks, ken, ah shouldnae be taking money off ma Mum, ah shouldnae but ah've got tae, naebody is employing. It's hard nowadays like, healthy hard, chances of getting a job, s-lim, very slim.

Rather than the charge of 'choosiness', a better way to capture the dynamic of Simon and Donna's situation would be to analyse the processes that have led to the point

where their motivation is sapped. This adopts a position which seeks to situate the issue both in terms of agency as well as the structural dynamics that have led to the situation where Simon, particularly, is discouraged. Simmons and Smyth (2016) argue that repetitive employability training programmes combined with periods of unemployment can lead to demotivation and a commitment to finding work fading, leading to what they call the 'discouraged worker' effect. For Simon the combination of poor school experience combined with poor college experience and poor work and training experiences have clearly impacted on his motivation. That combined with a lack of vision for his future is a potent combination in terms of his motivation to engage in the here-and-now.

The responses here support Côté's (2000) concept of 'arrested adulthood' as these young people are unable to make the school-to-work transition. But this is not a real choice on their own part. Rather it is a situation that is forced upon them by the lack of genuine working opportunities or other progression routes available to them which would offer tangible and meaningful outcomes. The charge of 'choosiness' is wide of the mark, certainly for the cohort here, some of whom have spent many months in low-paying (or no-paying) training programmes, who have taken on precarious zero hour contract positions and are willing to accept cleaning jobs and McDonalds jobs despite personally identifying them as unfulfilling. The recognitional danger of the label of choosiness is that it risks placing the responsibility of labour market marginalisation solely on the shoulders of the young people and allows the structural impediments these young people are having to negotiate to be overlooked. Here we can see the usefulness of Fraser's (2011) status model, as it allows us to grasp the imbrication of maldistribution and misrecognition imposed by institutional arrangements which work to marginalise young people.

A more appropriate way of thinking of Simon's reluctance to engage with the secondary labour market here is to add a fourth dynamic to Fraser's framework – and another 'r' – that of *resistance*. Rather than thinking of Simon's lack of engagement with the labour market, or Scott and Ryan earlier who withdrew their labour from programmes that they saw as a waste of time, as being 'choosy,' it is more accurate to consider it a mode of resistance to injustice. Smyth (2016) captures this resistance well when he writes of young people refusing to give their assent to participation in learning that they deem

illegitimate. He refers to young people who choose to disengage from a school environment they see as irrelevant to their lives; 'this was a refrain we heard repeatedly in our research – young people told us that they had exited school because they found it intolerable, and detaching themselves was the only way to maintain dignity and sanity' (p136). I argue that the experiences of the young people here are the same. Of course, it must be highlighted that such acts of resistance are not undermining the system that is marginalising them in the first place (Hollander and Einwohner, 2004). Lukes (2007) asks the question, 'can my power consist in abstaining from action?' (p59). Perhaps. But absent a collective and unified opposition such resistance may simply reinforce these young people's marginalisation (Lundstrøm and Øygard, 2015). The processes of individualisation and the misrepresentation of young people mean that such individual acts may remain just that – individual. Whereas Willis' (1977) lads were able to cultivate a sense of solidarity through their collective resistance to structural inequities, young people today are unable to do so due to the erosion of the very structures which underpin a collective class consciousness – a point that Willis (2004) himself acknowledges. But it *is* worth recognising that such acts are a form of agency on the part of the young people themselves. Again, returning to the notion of choosiness the real question here is: 'is this really a choice, in the genuine sense?' As Fraser (2016b) notes:

Marx is the most influential of these critiques and, to my mind, the most convincing...the secret of accumulation in capital's exploitation of wage labourers. Importantly, these workers are neither serfs nor slaves, but unencumbered individuals, free to enter the labour market and sell their "labour power." In reality, of course, they have little actual choice in the matter; deprived of any direct access to the means of production, they can only secure the means of subsistence by contracting to work for a capitalist in exchange for wages. (p164)

Of course, these young people are not even entitled to a wage, ripe as they are for expropriation rather than 'mere' exploitation. Faced with the options of participating in grindingly meaningless employability programmes for very little remuneration or opting out, it is unsurprising that many of these young people plump for the latter.

In terms of misrecognition, for Fraser (1996) the major injustice here is in terms of the 'inter-subjective' condition of participatory parity:

Precluded...are institutionalized value schemata that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction - whether by burdening them with

excessive ascribed “difference” from others or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness. (p31)

The structural impediments that result in the marginalisation of these young people can see them suffer misrecognition as the category of ‘unemployed’ comes loaded with stigma (Squires and Goldsmith, 2018). As Blackman and Rogers (2018) note, young people who claim benefits can find themselves labelled as ‘scum’ and a burden on society. Canduela et al (2010) suggest that, far from acknowledging the more prolonged and complex ‘delayed transitions’ caused in a large part by structural changes young people can find themselves blamed for their alleged ‘indolence’. Many of the young people are aware of this discourse:

**Amanda:** ...makes me raging, basically saying that ah’m no gonna get anywhere, gonna live on the dole all of ma life, ah’d probably punch them in the face, ah’m being serious, you’ve got to get to know someone before you judge them...(long pause)...they clearly dinnae know anything aboot you, you could have something going on in your life and you have something going on in your life which means you cannae work at this time, they actually have to look into that before they say anything.

Despite the churn and the marginalisation of a section of young people to the labour market periphery, these young people can find themselves labelled in popular discourse as ‘dole cheats’ and ‘chavs’ (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013; Stahl and Habib, 2017; Blackman and Rogers, 2018). The reality of young people’s maldistribution is misrepresented and the responsibility for their labour market marginalisation is placed firmly on their own shoulders. They suffer misrecognition by being labelled in pejorative terms for what is a structural injustice.

Returning to the notion of ‘choice,’ the young people had very little choice or options available to them and some spoke of being *compelled* on to various training programmes:

**Val:** Just hated it, like ah didnae, never got anything from school that ah wanted to go on tae, I dinnae think, I don’t think I’ll take anything from school into a job that I want to go into, forced me into going to childcare at the college, they put me into it and I didnae even want to go into it, didnae choose it...(long pause)...had to go every Thursday afternoon and then ah had to dae ma work placement thing, it was crap, never learnt anything frae it, telt me that I was going, probably just to keep me doing something...(long pause)...

**Scott:** The guy at...[agency]...I dunno I felt like he was starting to, I feel like, he, you really never had any say with him, he was like you're doing this and that's it, pretty much, I hated that as well. He would come up to me with different courses and stuff and he'd be like, Scott you need to do this and all that and he would sign me up for it and I would be like, na, I dunno...(long pause)...and he'd be like na, we're signing you up for it pretty much, send the forms away for different courses and I'd be like, I dunno, never really had a say, it was pretty annoying. Yeah, it was his decision for me to do car valeting as well so, wasn't my choice it was his...

Parents, support workers and job centre staff were all discussed as pushing young people into employability programmes, training programmes, volunteering and low-level college courses. In terms of justice, Fraser (2015) notes that:

With respect to agency, the subjects of this regime are interpellated as autonomous centres of initiative, the antithesis of the 'passive clients' of state-managed capitalism. But autonomy is figured as private and centred on 'choice' and 'personal responsibility.' Shorn of public political connotations, freedom acquires an economistic cast, as earlier consumerist motifs are hitched to newer tropes that hail subjects as possessors of human capital, which it is their responsibility to manage and maximize...the hegemonic view holds that the only just distribution is the one that results from voluntary market transactions...in such a world, individuals get exactly what they deserve; small shares reflect paltry talents or puny efforts. (p182-3)

Here we can see a direct link to the concept of the choice biography. Fraser makes the point that agency is conceived of in purely economic terms, with individuals expected to manage themselves (and their choices) in the marketplace for jobs. If they do not, the hegemonic view that individuals receive their just desserts means they are to blame for their own lack of initiative, their degree of agency called into question. The reality is the level of choice available to marginalised young people is extremely limited (and coercion and expropriation occurs). As table 4 shows, these young people display remarkable agency in their pursuance of stable employment but, unfortunately, they are compelled to pick over the crumbs at the labour market periphery whilst being blamed for their lot due to an imputed lack of agency or aspiration.

### **6.3.2 Aspiration**

Importantly, the marginalisation of these young people was not impacting on their future aspirations. As outlined in chapter 3 a common charge in more recent times in terms of social policy is that young people struggling in the labour market are lacking in

aspiration. This charge cannot be applied to any of the young people in this study as all described conventional wants for their future:

**Ed:** ...get a job, get ma car and build masel' up to get a good sturdy job, that ah could have for years and years and years, ah just ah want a job that a like doing, that ah'm good at, that ah can do and build up...

**Katie:** Get a good job, like being able to still have a social life, do driving lessons and stuff, get your own car, ain hoos, that is a good life to me...going oot with pals and stuff and family, living in a nice hoos, go on holiday once or twice a year, to Tenerife or something, just somewhere chilled and hot.

These two quotes are very much indicative of the cohort as the young people desired a stable job from which they could anchor and build themselves a career – and for most, hopes included a car, a home and perhaps a family in the future. There was no lack of aspiration in the group.

However, as the literature suggests, the ability to cogently connect the present to the future is becoming (or has become?) far more challenging for young people. Devadason (2008) notes it is one thing to have hopes and dreams, no matter how conventional these may be, it is quite another to be able to connect the immediate to those hopes in a coherent and structured way; 'a lack of progress in their employment and insecurity feed into their reluctance to plan. For those young adults present uncertainty seems to promote vagueness' (p1136). Anderson et al (2002) in their study on young people growing up in Kirkcaldy found that the majority of young people did make plans but, significantly, found that those with the least resources were less willing to make plans for the future, as it was deemed pointless. This was the case here. The respondents spoke of uncertainty and an inability to coherently plan for the future and in some cases were actively unwilling to do so:

**Simon:** Getting a job and that, ah don't even know myself. \*laughs\*...nut, ah dinnae, nut, nothing really, ah dinnae...(long pause)...money is what makes you happy. Got nae money you're pure drained, struggling, depressed, bored, you cannae do anything with yer pals, can't dae shit, so you need money.

**Lana:** I just kind of, I want to be happy not worry about money or losing my job or kind of moving house and just kind of being able to do things that I want to without worrying about it, that would be nice, I've gone to uni for 4 years and qualified for nothing and I know my future is dependent on someone wanting to hire me, so yeah, like, yeah, it's all very dependent on other people's decisions so if someone decides not to hire me then I can't do anything about that, or if my landlord decides to sell the flat then there's

nothing I can do about that, so yeah, but for now I have a flat and it's not going anywhere and I just need a job.

For Simon and Lana, like many others, the uncertainty of their current situation and their felt lack of control over their life means that they are reluctant (or unable?) to create any *solid* plans. Instead, they prioritised work in order to earn money to enable them to participate in social life with friends and to enable them to avoid material hardship. Bryant and Ellard (2015) found a similar motivation amongst the young people in their cohort:

For our participants a 'normal' future meant prioritising paid employment in the sequencing of their futures. Most participants were only minimally concerned with the type of work they wanted. Although some held clear ambitions, most expressed the view that employment was fundamental to achieving a secure future. (p490)

Instead, perhaps a more accurate way to locate these young people's future hopes is to think of their aspiration as 'bounded' (Evans, 2002). As other studies have found, rather than having low aspirations, these young people may in fact have low expectations – certainly in the immediate future due to their lack of qualifications and a growing sense of disenchantment given their struggles to gain a stable foothold in a hostile labour market. Returning to the concept of the 'Choice Biography' discussed in chapter 3 we can detect what could be a concerning development here. Much like other research has found, the ability of the young people in this study to develop a choice biography is severely limited given the lack of options available to them to secure stable employment. As Hoskins and Barker (2017) note, 'the issue facing many disadvantaged young people is the process of translating their high aspirations for the future into a lived reality' (p48).

As other research has found the important point is that opportunity structures and the extent to which young people feel their options are open or constrained are largely dictated by the structural conditions around them (Hardgrove et al, 2015). Hardgrove et al (2015) noted that for the young people in their study:

...they bounced from one job to another without any sign of advancement or continuity in employment. There were no predictable pathways that led to desirable outcomes. We argue that such a predicament diminishes ability to imagine specific possible selves toward which to navigate. (p168)

Finlay et al (2010) make the point that the discourse of 'more choices, more chances' was a welcome addition to the Scottish policy discourse. However, there is less focus given to the structural impediments that can inhibit young people's ability to develop and realise long-term objectives and ambitions (Mackie and Tett, 2013). What is perhaps needed is a move away from discussion on aspirations and choice towards an emphasis on ensuring young people can find routes towards interesting, fulfilling and decently paid employment (Archer et al, 2014).

As argued in chapter 3 in liberal societies such as the UK, young people are required to take responsibility for themselves and their future selves. However, it is essential not to lose sight of the fact that these young people's ability to visualise that path – and possible destinations – may be opaque, or entirely unclear given the innumerable factors that stand in their way. This includes a lack of resources, their previously negative experience of education, the lack of immediate options and the personal issues that many of these young people are dealing with on a sometime daily basis. With widening inequality and cuts to public resources to support young people in the transition from school-to-work, a focus on aspirations alone is doomed to failure if the evidence from this cohort is indicative of disadvantaged young people more widely (Archer et al, 2014; Zipin et al, 2015; Hartas, 2016).

This is critical in terms of misrecognition, as the Scottish Government (2014c) is foregrounding career services and guidance as a means of enabling young people to seize control of their future:

By offering young people - from as early as during their primary/nursery school education - a clear picture of all the career choices available to them, we will equip them with the skills and knowledge to make more informed choices throughout their school studies and beyond. (p29)

But this may be in vain for young people who are unable to access the stepping stones that can act as a 'launch pad' in the here-and-now:

**Martin:** Money is always a thing, it gives you that peace of mind, and stability, the injustice of having the rug pulled from under your feet I think. I've saw that with friends forced to work in supermarkets on zero hours contracts, once you don't have that stability, if you're not standing on a stable rock, or on that rung of the ladder you can't climb up on to that next one and if you don't have that stability then you don't have that opportunity that everyone should have to progress higher in your career, or starting a family,



or getting a house. So I think that's why stability keeps coming up for me, you have to have that sense of stability in order to be ambitious so I'm maybe over-cautious because of that.

**Ryan:** Dunno, it's stable just now but I'm on a see-saw, and I'm like kind of like stable. Like next year in January I might be, still stable, but I might be sliding down, like falling off it, so, dunno. Think, probably hoping to get into college, I'm here until December so just now it's alright, quite stable, but when I leave here I'll hopefully get into college or get a job. I'm sure the ...[agency]...will help me, so I'm pretty stable.

Time and again in the young people's narratives the issue of stability surfaced. For Martin, in a precarious but relatively stable job, his previous mental health issues mean that he is happy to stay in the relative stability of that job rather than risk a move elsewhere or think too deeply about his future. For Ryan, the lack of security in his current role means that he is not willing to look too far into the future, unsure as to what path his life will (or should) take. When the next step is unclear then it would appear challenging to contemplate steps beyond.

For most of the young people their lack of finance and experience of hardship results in them being unwilling to look beyond the immediate. Frequently in the interviews they prioritised money above any thoughts of working towards a long-term plan. For Maya, the financial difficulties at home combined with a lack of formal qualifications (due in large part to caring responsibilities at home disrupting school) mean that her priority is earning money to assist her Mum who is struggling to work due to ongoing mental health issues:

**Maya:** For me, personally, em...(long pause)...to earn money, to get an income, help ma Mum out, provide for myself, I hate relying on ma Mum for just even, going out with friends, asking for 10-20 pounds, hated doing that, ah just wanted to have ma own independence, ma own money and then take it from there. Ah wasn't really career minded, ah didn't think to myself ah want to be a teacher, or work in a bank or, it was just, I'll just see where I go, 'cos obviously, ah did alright at school, but ah wasn't the brightest, so ah didn't really know what ah wanted to do, that made it hard em, in the sense of, em, getting a job and stuff or going to college.

The difficulties at home combined with poor qualifications mean that Maya is not thinking too far ahead. For other young people in the cohort:

**Scott:** Haven't got a clue. Ah'll definitely go to college, ah just feel that's the only option, you know? You can't just go out and get a job. Ah need to go to college and work ma way up. Pretty much...(long pause)...kind of shitty but

aw well, ah wouldnae say ah'm stressed oot or dying, but ah'm definitely worried, ah dunno, 'cos ah've no got the qualifications but ah could start off low and go higher, but that's a year wasted. I'm just unsure about ma future...(long pause)...what ah'm ah gonna do? I have no idea. I don't give a fuck about joinery, or bricklaying...\*laughs\*...Mum's like you're a lazy bastard, need to go and get a job, but it's no like I want to sit aboot and dae nothing, you know? It's not like I want to sit on my arse all day, ken, ah'm just 19, it's just, what do I want to do? I want to do something, just what is that?

**Simon:** ...ah dinnae...(long pause)...ah just go, just, whatever happens, happens, never ever thought, I'm not one of those people, you know, it all just tumbles and it's shite, so ah just dinnae think ahead, whatever happens, happens.

Scott's ability to plan his future is significantly compromised by the felt lack of choice and this is causing him anxiety in the here-and-now, partly due to his feeling pressure to come to some sort of decision regarding his future. Due to personal circumstances impacting on them in the here-and-now, many of the participants stated that they are reluctant to look too far ahead. For Simon, the discouragement he feels having struggled on the labour market periphery for nearly five years sees him refusing to engage with a long-term plan. As a result, we can witness the negativity he feels about the present, resultantly impacting upon his ability and willingness to engage with future planning. The danger here is that his discouragement and lack of future planning are uniting and may act as a form of 'social closure' (Hillmert, 2011).

For David, the combination of his lack of qualifications and his struggle with depression mean that his future concerns do not go beyond the next week:

**David:** I don't feel at the moment that I have a future, there's obviously ma mental health and the way that some of my family feels about me, and em...\*voice faltering\*...just like, family and mental health, so....(long pause)...ah like to live in the here and now and ah don't like to think about the future, most of the time, the future is a week's time, I want to get to the stage where ah can work, ah want to get a job, ah want to move oot of ma hoos, ah want to start ma own life and live, sort out ma mental health, yeah, really...(long pause)...and more confidence, always had trouble believing in myself, there's a lot of hurdles in the way that I need to get past and I don't know if I ever will, at the moment, but I know I need to get past them and that, I'm at the starting point, I dunno whether to feel positive or negative, just, sometimes, I just, avoid doing stuff.

Although David does harbour very conventional wants for his long-term future, the path to achieving these is muddled, currently, due to his immediate issues. It is

understandable that he cannot see beyond these at the moment and wishes to address these first, before thinking too deeply about how to achieve his future goals.

The justice issue here is that for young people without much in the way of financial resources or qualifications or with immediate and pressing issues and marginalised to the labour market periphery, their ability to rationally plan an imagined future is compromised in a way that their better-resourced contemporaries do not experience. The more pernicious aspect of this precarity is that this instability breeds ontological insecurity, creating 'a structure of affect which represents a heightened sense of expendability or disposability that is differentially distributed throughout society' (Butler, 2011: 13). For the young people here it is an acute issue.

Such a situation exacerbates already existing (redistributive) inequalities, allowing young people with more capital to work towards a stable and more secure future (Foster and Spencer, 2011; Bryant and Ellard, 2015). The domains of redistribution and recognition intersect again. There is a danger that these young people may be blamed for seemingly 'drifting' in the labour market, caught in the churn and finding themselves unable to move on (House of Lords, 2016). The government, for example, can argue that these young people have been equipped with the necessary guidance to work towards a stable and secure career. However, due to the various issues described and evidenced above, these young people are unable to imagine or begin to work towards a 'career' due to structural impediments in their immediacy. The paradox is that as we have seen the growth of individualisation and the associated pressures of the 'choice biography', the key social institutions of school, work, community and the family are no longer acting as guarantors of successful youth to adult transitions (Leccardi, 2014). As such, young people such as those in this study are particularly at risk of finding themselves blamed for not availing themselves of the opportunity to engage with career advice offered. Fraser (2011) writes that:

I take the relevant slice of culture to be institutionalised patterns of value that regulate social interaction. When such patterns are hierarchical, I claim, the effect is to impede some actors from participating on a par with others in social interaction. That, for me, is the very definition of injustice in general – and of misrecognition in particular. (p71)

The emphasis on equipping young people with the individual capacity to navigate the challenging labour market falls firmly into the 'affirmative' category of redistribution –

seeking to change end-state injustices without altering the underlying inequalities that generate them in the first place (Fraser, 1997a). As highlighted before, the danger is that affirmative redistributive strategies such as this risk stigmatizing disadvantaged young people, adding the insult of misrecognition to maldistribution. Offering intensive career guidance without addressing the cause of young people's initial marginalisation will do little to alter the issues which led to their situation in the first place. Government policy that emphasises that young people need to take responsibility for their own career choices severely risks constructing an agentic and individualised view of young people's ability to construct a coherent career path by airbrushing out of the picture the innumerable impediments disadvantaged young people must overcome to fulfil their potential.

As stated already, this is not to say that the cohort here do not have aspirations for the future – far from it. The point is how they plan to get there from the present, connecting the present to the future in a meaningful way. These young people are caught in what Leccardi (2012) terms a 'future without a project'. In this way, the government may not be off the mark in terms of encouraging young people to plan for the future. In terms of justice however, there needs to be more thought given to resourcing young people who suffer redistributive injustice to equip them with the tools to make a meaningful connection between present and future. And recognition needs to be paid to the difficulties young people like those in the cohort face in terms of connecting past-present-future. The multiple injustices experienced in the past are contributing to their experience of injustice in the present. Unless addressed it will result in them carrying this forward into their future. This risk is heightened by the misrecognition they are experiencing by the misplaced labelling of their supposed lack of aspiration and their supposed inability to plan their future. As Heinz (2009) states, competence in making a successful school-to-work transition needs a labour market that allows young people genuine choice and has an availability of good quality, stable jobs that will allow young people to begin the process of building a career. Recognition that this is not the case for these young people is overdue.

The institutionalised discourse of appropriate post-school destination is not addressing the above. For the majority of these young people who, due to various circumstances, have had a largely negative experience of formal education, the motivation to move into

further or higher education is largely absent. For many of the participants the motivation to attend college is driven more by a lack of alternative options and a realisation that their lack of qualifications leave them at a significant disadvantage in the labour market. The problem in terms of justice is that the paths propagated by policy as the best routes forward for young people, given the challenging labour market, are further and higher education – particularly higher education (Dorling, 2010; Côté, 2014a; Parker et al, 2017). These young people are caught in a ‘justice trap’ – due to maldistribution they are unable to find the employment that would allow them to take control of their life and avoid having to rely on the state (either in terms of social security or state funded employability programmes). As they are unable to do so, they then run the risk of the misrecognition by not following the ‘correct’ path into further or higher education. As Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) notes,

In some cases, they may need to be unburdened of excessive ascribed or constructed distinctiveness. In other cases, they may need to have hitherto underacknowledged distinctiveness taken into account. In still other cases, they may need to shift the focus onto dominant or advantaged groups, outing the latter’s distinctiveness, which has been falsely parading as universal.  
(p47)

In this case, what perhaps needs to be challenged is the idea that moving on to higher education is the ‘normal’ path for young people post-school and those that do not make this transition are then subsequently at risk of misrecognition (MacDonald, 2011). To emphasise the point and make it explicit – when the issue of integration is structural, rather than individual, it is an injustice for these young people to suffer misrecognition. When young people are desperate to find work, are making every effort to find work, find their options are limited and are rebuffed at every turn in their search of stable and secure employment, then it is an injustice.

Added to this a regular feature of the narratives was of young people’s attachment to ‘place’ and this is also important in terms of the options available to young people. As Roberts (2012) so presciently notes, structural influences such as place circumvent the horizon of young people’s opportunity. In the locality under scrutiny, the volume of hair and beauty salons appears to be influencing the post-school choice of many of the participants, as does the availability of gendered courses at the local college (which do

not require high level qualifications to access). Kintrea et al (2015) ask the very pertinent question:

...whether, and if so how, living in a particular place (as distinct from coming from a particular socioeconomic, class or ethnic background) influences people's life chances? The key question is whether such neighbourhoods merely reflect poverty or if they also serve to maintain and extend it by embedding their residents in a context that activates further disadvantage. (p669)

To reiterate, there is nothing inherently wrong with the young people following career paths in hair and beauty, or in construction or other manual industries. But what is questionable is that occupational aspirations continue to be formed by discourses that appeal to traditional gender roles concerning masculinity and femininity (MacDonald and Marsh, 2005). Although young people can display remarkable agency, it is often shaped by class backgrounds and the local availability of opportunities that follow traditional gendered roles. The question is are these opportunities led by the young people or are the young people being led towards these particular careers by the availability of these courses? The point in terms of justice is that 'choice' does not exist in a socio-cultural (or economic) vacuum. These young people's future paths are heavily circumscribed by what is available to them in their immediate locale, their treatment by the agencies they engage with and their ability to seize on opportunities that come their way. It is pure fantasy to suggest that young people have equal opportunity to pursue a path to a successful and stable career of their choice.

As Woodman and Wyn (2015) note, place is not just the backdrop of young people's lives, but is an active force that shapes their life path. Webster (2009) states, 'working-class young people's marginalised transitions to adulthood often take place in inner city neighbourhoods and peripheral estates characterised by de-industrialisation, destabilisation, deprivation' (p70). Young people growing up in poorer areas have a tendency to remain rooted within their neighbourhoods and communities (McDowell, 2002; MacDonald et al, 2005; Farrugia, 2014). As numerous scholars have argued, for young working-class people attachment to place can play an important part in their sense of self and their sense of belonging (Reay and Lucey, 2000; Skeggs, 2004; Stahl and Baars, 2016). For sure, there is a real ambivalence in the narratives in this study regarding their locality, with several of the interviewees complaining about 'junkies',

crime, stigma and a lack of opportunity in the labour market. On the other hand, the majority of the participants spoke of the sense of community that exists, the sense of security they feel having grown up in the area and the family networks that provide care and support:

**Marie:** Em...most people would say it's rough, but I think anywhere has got their rough bits it wouldnae be Porttown, it's got that stigma where if you meet somebody, 'like where are you from?' 'Aw I'm fae Porttown' and they're like 'Ooooooh God.' I like the sense of community you always go past someone and you ken them, it's ma home, that's ma hometown.

**Craig:** It's alright, could be better, junkies and that puts you off living in Porttown, it's a shit hole...\*laughs\*...em, but I know everybody like, I walk along the street and everyone's like 'aw Craig, Craig, Craig, like that so, I've got lots of friends and family, stuff like that...(long pause)...

As Cuervo and Wyn (2014) write, 'it is about the social relationships that provide a life anchor, a sense of personal physical and symbolic location...young people's relationships to people and places are a source of well-being and security, particularly in times of uncertainty' (p907-13). Such connections are critical to the young people in this study, yet the importance of place is often lost in policy which can exhort young people today to be 'mobile' and to look outside their immediate locale in order to seek employment and opportunity (Fejes, 2010; Corbett and Forsey, 2017; France and Roberts, 2017). Here we can witness an inherent tension – on the one hand, neoliberalism exhorts young people to be flexible and mobile; on the other hand, young people can seek the security and familiarity of their home as an anchor in a sea of uncertainty. This is the case for the majority of participants in this study:

**Adam:** Naewhere else can beat Porttown, everything's here. Aye, I'm a Porttownner, you just call yourself a Porttownner if you've lived here all your life, but not necessarily, I think it's in yer ain mind, but you might not be classed as one by other people. I dunno why I'd want to stay, it's probably because ah grew up here, but, ah dunno, it's a safe place, like...(long pause)...ah ken most people, can walk doon ma street, ken most folk on ma street, everything like that, why would you want to move away?

**Megan:** I wouldnae move oot ma Mum's house, ah wouldnae move oot...(long pause)...ah get fed, like ah gie ma Mum digs and that, but what's the point, why would you want to move oot? I have the best Mum.

In terms of justice it has to be acknowledged that place is not a benign factor in young people's opportunities to progress in life. Dillabough et al (2014) make the important

point that ‘representations of youth exclusion...are, of course, not evenly spread across places, but carry instead strong local influences, and emerge in clearly delineated urban spaces’ (p660). Several writers make the point that policy discourses appeal to a certain subjectivity in young people; neoliberal, individualised and highly flexible (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Stahl and Habib, 2017). However, such subjectivities are highly classed and for young working-class people, such as the majority of young people in this study, their attachment to place is potentially bound up in their marginalisation. When the policy discourse prioritises flexibility and mobility, young working-class people’s attachment and adherence to their neighbourhoods can potentially contribute to their misrecognition. As Stahl and Habib (2017) note, ‘within a neoliberal conception which privileges a trajectory of upward mobility...working-class attachment to place often connotes stagnation, ambivalence, defeat and failure’ (p2). When the policy discourse foregrounds the importance of young people’s individual choice within education and labour markets, the importance of their attachment to place shifts the inequality of local opportunity structures to the foreground. Wyn and Woodman (2006) suggest that when the onus of ‘choice’ is placed upon the shoulders of young people and they are forced to draw on their own and their family’s resources to achieve their goals then the result is, inevitably, one of inequality. As such, it is important to add ‘place’ to this dynamic in order to understand the impediments to participatory parity that young people growing up in neighbourhoods such as Porttown must overcome in comparison to young people growing up in areas with more resources (economic as well as social and cultural) and more opportunities. And this is yet another example of a site of intersection between maldistribution and misrecognition.

### **6.3.3 Cultural Misrecognition**

The young people in this study are not completely blind to structural processes that create challenges and pressures for them. As France and Haddon (2014) found in their research, the sample here were able to reflexively apprehend processes that place them at a disadvantage in comparison to young people with greater access to resources. However, they hold in their hand at the same time the belief that the only means of overcoming their disadvantage was by their own energy and effort:

**Scott:** Like ma guidance teacher just kept telling me to go and do bricklaying or something, so that’s what ah’m thinking, ‘aw shit ah need to go and do



bricklaying' you know? So ah did go and do bricklaying, you know...but that's maybe no the way it should be? Like, the higher, the posh and like higher classes? Naw! \*laughs\*...na, no danger they were getting told to go to college and do bricklaying, ah know...\*laughs\*...like aw the lower class lassies and that, 'go and do hairdressing, go and do something in beauty' you know? It's fucking shocking man, you know?

The recognition of class difference is explicit in the quote from Scott above. For the most part in the narratives, however, acknowledgement of social difference tended to be implicit. Returning to the earlier point on aspiration and appropriate post-school destinations, for example, several respondents felt that university wasn't 'for people like them,' again, pointing to evidence that opportunity structures are highly classed and gendered (Reay et al, 2009):

**Adam:** Well, some of ma family might have, ma Gran's sister, she's a headmistress at two schools, but ah never speak to her...(long pause)...but very posh, very well spoken, ma Grandad probably went to university but it's never been something for me.

Others felt that they were seen as 'chavs' and that this will result in them struggling to find employment as they were seen as 'scummy.' Several respondents discussed the implications of inequality and how this, in different ways, can act as an impediment to their moving forward in life. Donna, for example, discussed the efforts she makes to hide the indicators of her social background at job interviews, feeling that these were barriers to her being taken seriously at job interviews:

**Donna:** ...it's discrimination ken what ah mean? Look ah go suited, suit right up for interviews like, suited and booted and speak prim and proper, ah only speak like this with you's because you's speak just like us, you's are just like us, this is why ah speak just like what I am, ken, but ah speak prim and proper in interviews like, no swearing and that. Ah think it's inappropriate like, aye, aye, ah wouldnae be like 'aye and nut' ah'd be 'yes, no' ken? It wouldnae be 'what yea daein' it would be like 'what are you doing' ah wouldnae speak slang, ken? I'd be speaking proper. Like you've got your slang outside and you've got your proper talk, tae yer pals an' that you can be like aye, nut, there it's like, 'please get out of my way please.' 'please, thank you'...

Despite this implicit awareness of structures which can act as impediments, these narratives are punctuated with an emphasis on their future hopes and dreams being dependent on how much effort they themselves are willing to put in. These processes are of course not mutually exclusive but there still exists the danger that young people, to some degree, blame themselves for any 'failure' to move on in life. An added issue of

injustice here, in relation to the issue of blame, and connected to future planning, is that of where 'blame' lies for young people unable to secure the stable and well-remunerated employment that will allow them to move forward in life with confidence:

**Craig:** Nae one else is in control, who else? Aye...(long pause)...because anybody can do it, you just have to try, it's just a matter of effort, if you really want something you have to put in whatever it takes and getting it...(long pause)...anybody can do anything that they want, if you put your mind to it, ah've always been told that being brought up, you can be anything you want you just have to put your mind to it. Well, I am putting ma mind to it but it's really hard to get a job at the minute, you work towards it...(long pause)...what ah mean, you can be anything you want if you put your mind to, so if ah want to be a fucking artist right now, you can be an artist, anybody can dae anything, you could be a brain surgeon.

Like Evans (2002) found amongst her cohort, the young people in this study were rarely fatalistic, believing they would realise their ambitions and invested a great deal of importance in individual effort and believed that through hard work they would be able to achieve these ambitions. However, we can see in Craig's quote an element of uncertainty and an awareness of the challenging labour market situation he currently faces, before he returns to the belief that anyone can be whatever they want to be. In this we can see a confirmation, to some extent, of the epistemological fallacy as posited by Furlong and Cartmel (2007).

But what does this mean in terms of social justice? It appears that, for the most part, this respondent is buying into the popular narrative of the 'American Dream' and this is propagated by social policy to a large extent - there is a clear breach of justice (Mackie and Tett, 2013). In terms of recognitional justice, the lack of attention paid to the structural barriers that individuals such as those in this study experience means that young people who are unable to realise their goals, or even begin working towards them, are at risk of being labelled as deficient. Worse still, they may blame themselves for being unable to access opportunities to allow them to move forward in life. Certainly for the young people in this study, this is a significant risk given their belief that their future success depends on their own efforts, even if they seem to have an awareness of the barriers that they face due to their own disadvantage. Again, returning to Fraser's status model we can see how cultural misrecognition can be codified formally with the individualised conception of employability, the supply-side policy orthodoxy in terms of unemployment, the appeal to young people to seize control of their own future and the

erasure of structural impediments in much policy discourse around young people and employability (Raffass, 2016; Crisp and Powell, 2017). Such institutionalised patterns certainly contribute to how an issue is framed and place young marginalised people at particular risk of misrecognition. As Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) notes:

For the status model...misrecognition is a matter of externally manifest and publicly verifiable impediments to some people's standing as full members of society. To redress it, again, means to overcome subordination. This in turn means changing institutions and social practices – once again, by deinstitutionalising patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and replacing them with patterns that foster it. (p31)

It is important that the barriers that young people such as those here experience are highlighted and placed centrally when considering their ability to construct a future path for themselves. An alternative discourse that pays due recognition to the structural impediments that inhibit their ability to achieve participatory parity would go some way to aiding these young people to at least acknowledge that their 'failure' to move into stable and secure employment is not entirely of their own making. And that appeals to the 'American Dream' are a fabrication (Gale et al, 2017; Littler, 2017).

In terms of cultural misrecognition it is also important to highlight the stigma attached to those that access social security. For many of the young people in the study they are entitled to EMA as they are on Activity Agreement<sup>21</sup> (AA) programmes and fulfil the necessary stipulations to receive this every fortnight. Many however, are entitled to claim either JSA, Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) depending on their personal circumstances. For those in receipt of either of these benefits, there is little doubt as to how they feel perceived:

**Marie:** I didnae want to be on benefits ah'd rather be oot having a job, ah didnae want to be labelled as, ah dunno, like young mums get labelled as 'aw aye they only got pregnant for the benefits and the houses and this and that, but actually it's not like that. Most people think you get...(long

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<sup>21</sup> Activity Agreement programmes are aimed 'those young people whose immediate and future learning and skills needs have been assessed and it has been recognised that without this first step engagement and support, they would not make a successful transition toward and into further learning or training and ultimately employment' (Scottish Government, 2018c: 1). These are individually tailored packages of learning, typically centred on building confidence, improving core skills and developing a plan for progression towards more formal employability programmes. Many Activity Agreement programmes across Scotland, such as the one in Porttown, are delivered by youth workers. Several of the young people in the cohort here are on AA programme and the practitioners in this study, Sarah and Ella, co-ordinate it. As part of the AA, young people receive an EMA (£30 per week) if they qualify for it (all the young people here did so) and if they fulfil their hours per week (hours vary from young person to young person depending on their programme of activities and their readiness to engage for more hours per week). For more information see: Scottish Government (2018c)

pause)...pregnant so you can get a house and you can get housing benefit and you can get child tax credits and income support and child benefit but that's no...(long pause)...Christ I found out when I was five and half months, it wisnae even on ma radar to be pregnant never mind for a house and for benefits, eh, I wanted to be oot like my Mum and Dad, both worked since they were 16 whereas I had obviously done the two year at college and ah thought well ah'm coming up 18 now I'll go oot and get a job and it just never worked oot like that.

For Marie, as with the other two young mothers in the cohort, claiming social security alongside their status as young mothers formed a potent combination in terms of their feeling shame and stigmatisation. As Kehily (2018) notes, for older women, motherhood is constructed as the peak of female achievement; for teenage mothers an indicator of childish selfishness. And this is particularly so for those in receipt of state welfare. These young women are bucking 'the normalized life trajectory of a female in contemporary society – a pathway through education, career, marriage, and *then* family' (Francombe-Webb and Silk, 2016: 667 – *emphasis in original*). As Fraser (2005a) suggests, affirmative redistributive policies often come with an added dose of misrecognition and this is particularly the case for teenage mothers and the moral opprobrium which positions them as sexually irresponsible scroungers. Thus, it can be argued that they suffer misrecognition twice over - and suffer the insult of misrecognition added to the injury of deprivation (Fraser, 1995b). Fraser (2000) makes the point that misrecognition can stem from multiple sources:

In some cases, misrecognition is juridified, expressly codified in formal law; in other cases, it is institutionalized via government policies, administrative codes or professional practice. It can also be institutionalized informally - in associational patterns, longstanding customs or sedimented social practices of civil society. But whatever the differences in form, the core of the injustice remains the same: in each case, an institutionalized pattern of cultural value constitutes some social actors as less than full members of society and prevents them from participating as peers. (p114)

In the case of teenage mothers, it is fair to say that the misrecognition has come from 'all of the above.' Policy and public health concerns were constructed around teenage mothers in the 1990s and have continued since and popular representations continue to frame early motherhood as an indicator of poor education and promiscuity, loaded with moral failure, condensing in to the label of 'pramface' (Nayak and Kehily, 2014). This 'othering' is felt by the young women, contributing to their alienation and a sense of shame which all three were experiencing to differing degrees. This despite a raft of

evidence which suggests that teenage motherhood need not be associated with the multitude of negative outcomes that we see in popular portrayals (Duncan et al, 2010; Stapleton, 2010; Clarke, 2013; Sniekers and van den Brink, 2019). Although Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) contests Honneth's (1995) conception of misrecognition, perhaps Lister (2008) is closest to the mark – that in terms of misrecognition the ability to achieve participatory parity and the psychological impact of poverty are entwined – it is equally a matter of self-realisation and a form of institutionalized subordination. But as Fraser (Fraser and Honneth, 2003) notes, it is important to situate the origin of this injustice – in an institutionalised discourse of misrecognition regarding teenage motherhood. In this way we can perhaps make a stronger claim for the intersection of all three of Fraser's domains. As we saw earlier, with Sue choosing not to join friends for a coffee lest she be viewed as a 'charity case' the implications of othering can be significant. We can witness how maldistribution and misrecognition can extend to misrepresentation if the young mothers disengage from participation in community life due to their felt sense of misrecognition. All three domains combine to limit the ability of the young mothers to achieve anything like participatory parity.

The stigmatisation of welfare recipients also extended to the other young people in the study. Such was the seriousness of this, several of the young people had decided not to access benefits of which they are entitled:

**David:** I'm aware of the language that people use, a lot of people, people have said to me benefit cheat and that, and I'm like, yeah, ah've never claimed a benefit at all, I claim EMA through here, but that's all I've claimed at all...(long pause)...ah dinnae feel that I deserve it, that's how I feel, if I'm not contributing I don't deserve it, that's something that no-one has taught me, that is just something that I feel. Something that I've always felt, I don't think I deserve money. It was a couple of months ago I applied for jobseekers, with the intention of giving it all to ma Mum, it was mainly for her, I never had enough, ID and stuff to get it, and that was it, went once and that was it. Ah don't have any photographic ID...

**Katie:** I could be signing on, applying for PIP because of ma diabetes...(long pause)...ah just dinnae want to do it because it's embarrassing...(long pause)...young people shouldnae be at the job centre, should be looking for a job, doesnae matter if they've got money or no...(long pause)...dunno, you just get slagged, people call them tramps and that, bums, like, they cannae be arsed going for jobs and that, that sort of stuff...(long pause)...that's why I dinnae get seen at the job centre, it's all junkies and that that go, ah would

rather just get ma EMA, £60 every two weeks, so ah've got mair motivation to go and get a job and to get more money, ah just dinnae want to.

The influence of the 'deserving vs undeserving discourse' currently permeating through society is evident in both quotes. Wilkinson and Ortega-AlcÁzar (2017) state:

Young people on benefits are particularly demonised in these discourses, and are positioned as especially undeserving because of their age. Young people are often held up as the prime example of those who think they are owed 'something for nothing.' (p333)

As a result of this, several of the young people in the cohort discussed foregoing social security, not applying and relying on already overstretched household budgets for money. This again, is a form of *resistance*, joining the 'missing workless' by not accessing benefits in an attempt to sidestep the moral opprobrium that they feel comes with social security payments. Such acts may be self-harming in terms of sacrificing much needed financial income, but these young people are 'choosing' maldistribution over misrecognition such is the power of the stigmatising discourse circulating around welfare receipt. Other research has drawn attention to the strategies those in receipt of welfare adopt to differentiate themselves from others on welfare, who they portray as less deserving in order to protect their own identity (Chase and Walker, 2013; Patrick, 2016). Katie, like others in the cohort, is moving beyond this strategy by choosing welfare exile in order to protect her identity as a 'worker' and resisting the scrounger narrative (Howe, 1998).

Of course, the application of negative rhetoric to welfare claimants has a long history in the UK. But it has been particularly virulent since the coalition government was formed in 2008 with talk of a 'culture of welfare dependency' emanating from the very top levels of government (Patrick, 2014). We can see how the young people's not accessing social security can be conceived of as a violation of Fraser's status model. Such institutional subordination is working to deny young people access to the most minimal of income by virtue of a discourse of depreciation which is promulgated by politicians and is given further oxygen by right-wing media and 'poverty porn' television (Blackman and Rogers, 2018).

The final area of cultural misrecognition to emerge from the interviews highlights the importance of an intersectional analysis to the interrogation of misrecognition. And this concerns the experience of two young Sikh women in the study. Divya and Maya,

despite coming from quite different socio-economic backgrounds, shared very similar experiences in terms of the cultural and gender expectations that were framing their lives. Both interviews followed a similar pattern: discussion of the cultural restrictions that a young Sikh woman in their community must tolerate, the cultural restrictions that mean a young Sikh woman has limited scope to follow their own future career goals, that they accept these restrictions as part of their life before admitting that they, in fact, find these restrictions frustrating and a limit on their freedom. Divya, in particular, discussed the various restrictions that currently framed her life, and it is worth quoting her at length in order to fully understand the impact of these:

**Divya:** So that's another thing about going out at night and stuff like that, so if ah was to go out at night to a club, and be seen, they'd phone ma Mum, or ma brother or ma Dad, do you get it? That's how it close it is, that's why it is hard to do things in...[city]...there's this fear that someone is going to see you and you'll get in trouble for it regardless...(long pause)...ah'm curious, I'd like to go for a night out but it's not, like I said, not to the point where I'm going to start rebelling or making an issue of it at home, but sometimes I'm just like, I wish I could go out and get absolutely hammered, you know? But the other sense, it's like, I'm fine, I'll just go to bed...\*laughs\*...read a book and just go to sleep, it's fine, like I've been invited, too many times, come and do this, come and do that, ah just...(long pause)...to save peace in ma house, rather not ask ma parents, because ah'm at that age for suitors, if somebody goes to phone, like and say, oh yeah we've got this guy and he's from Manchester and he's tall and handsome and we're thinking for Divya and you know, that family could phone someone connected to my family and be like, you know, there's this thing going about, someone saw Divya. I seen her, she had her hair down and didn't have her scarf on and she was out doing this, basically a tramp! Walking down...[street]...and this, that and the other, you know, we're not too sure, that will hinder, you know what ah mean? That chance of me getting with somebody if someone sees me in a disrespectful light, so if someone was to phone and say they seen me with a skirt on, and like, so much make-up on and stuff like that, basically they'd be like, aw no, she wears a skirt and you know, she's got a faceful of make-up, who knows what she's been up to? So...(long pause)...then, you have to keep that respectability about you at all times. And that's the gist of it.

Throughout the interviews with both Divya and Maya the theme that kept appearing was that of 'respectability'. It was clear in both Divya and Maya's narratives that they felt that they were missing out in terms of doing the sorts of things that other young people do (in terms of fashion, going out at the weekend and mixing with other young

people). Both made reference to izzat<sup>22</sup> and the importance of maintaining and upholding family honour in their daily conduct and how adherence to this was essential for any young women from their community. Failure to do so would jeopardise their chances of marrying well and damage the reputation of the family within the community (Dale et al, 2002). As Bhopal (2016) observes, for British Asian women, community membership can be a form of pressure where cultural 'norms' are enforced and 'ethnic capital' can be a 'complex, contested and sometimes contradictory concept' (p506). On the one hand family provides support, love and various resources; on the other, informal pressures can be stifling and limit the future possibilities for Maya and Divya.

Both described being limited in terms of the occupations that they were currently able to follow. Both wanted to go to university in order to achieve their life goals but this was not a possibility for either as family and community norms mean that a young woman attending a university or moving out into a tenancy of their own in another city was out of the question. Maya described the relentless pressure that her Grandmother put on her and her parents to remove her from school at the earliest opportunity in order that she learn how to run and maintain the household:

**Maya:** There was a pressure for leaving in 4<sup>th</sup> year, like ma Gran she was like, you know, 'when she gets to 16, get her out of school' type thing, so...\*laughs\*...so, I stayed on until about three quarters of the way into 5<sup>th</sup> year and ma Gran was just going mad, she was saying, 'you need to get her out of school', every time I used to see her she'd be like 'are you still in school?' and ah was like, 'yeah, I'm getting an education' and she's like 'you can leave now, you can stay home and start cooking and cleaning.' But I have been cooking and cleaning since I was 12 years old anyway, I knew how to run a household at 12 basically.

As Bhopal (2016) also found, cultural pressures can have a significant impact on opportunities as young woman are forbidden from moving away as families want to be able to monitor behaviour and 'keep an eye on them.'

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<sup>22</sup> Izzat refers to 'honour,' 'prestige,' or 'respectability' (Gunasinghe et al, 2018). Mucina (2015) defines it as 'honour and/or reputation of the family, community, and nation; Responsibility of an individual to other members of their life; respect for self and others' (pX). She goes on to define it as a 'moral code' through which women self-police (as well as are policed). Should the young women stray beyond the acceptable boundaries of izzat, it not only reflects poorly on them but also brings dishonour to the family as well as the wider community. Purewal and Hashmi (2015) note that izzat places particular restrictions on young women as they are expected to adhere to conventions in terms of mobility, roles, behaviours, appearance and kinship norms.



**Maya:** Yeah, so if ah wanted to go to uni, and say it was ...[city]...ah couldn't move to ...[city]...myself, it's more accepted for a boy to do that than a girl, like, if ah was to do that, 'she'd be getting up to all sorts!', like, yeah, you never know, but em, even if ma family were to be cool with it, it would, you know, the society would look at you in a bad way, you don't really question it to be honest, yeah...(long pause)...it's just how it is...(long pause)...it just depends, from what communities Sikh people come from, some Sikh communities it's OK for girls to go and study, parents encourage them to become doctors and lawyers, they understand that they are going to have to go away for a certain amount of time to do what they're going to do, but, like, in our caste like it's quite strict in that sense when it comes to girls and stuff.

Once they have married and had children Maya and Divya may then be able to go to university and follow their own career goals but even at that point this would not be viewed entirely dispassionately.

Both were 23 at the time of the interview and both were under significant pressure from family and the wider community to find a suitor and begin the process of being wed. Divya described the situation facing her:

**Divya:** The priority now is to find a good suitor, because the only way, ah feel, myself, in my Mum and Dads eyes, I feel like ah've reached ma potential, the only way I can go out and start doing certain things that ah want to do, is to get married, for instance, ma dream job is like, midwifery. So I want to become a midwife. Now, these courses are 4, 5 years long, yeah, so ah've not got that here, I've not got those years here, because you know, by next year I'll probably get married and I'll probably move away, so ah want to sort, and then ah want to settle down and have kids and that, after, or even before, and then start ma course, or whatever, so, em, ah've got things that ah want to do and things that ah want but ah can only do when ah get married, it's horrible, 'cos I don't want to leave my family for shit, but you know, but for me to access certain things, that's what I have to do, like this thing about keeping ma hair open and cutting it and stuff like that, ah can't do that, and obviously ah can't go out and just get a boyfriend or have male company and just chill and stuff, in order for me to do that I have to get married. You know, ah'm 23, ah want to settle down with somebody, as long as ma parents were lenient with what ah was doing and ah could be ma own person and go out, meet a guy then ah would do that, stuff like that and go and find ma own guy and it was fine then yeah, but it's just that, the way we've been brought up it's like ah'm 23 but then ah've still got pressure of the community. 'Cos they see it as a bad thing that she's 23, 'is there something wrong with her? Why is she not engaged yet?' So ah've had that pressure from about 20, waiting on a suitor, but you know, and that's another reason ah just want it to happen so then people from the community are, 'why is she not engaged yet', like they'll say it blatantly, in front of my face, 'why have you not found her someone yet?', it's like, well we need to find the next person, you know, as age goes on, so the older I get, the harder it becomes for me.

The tension in Divya's narrative above is explicit. On the one hand she suggests earlier in the interview that she is happy to be married to a suitor of her parent's choosing, but later in the interview (in the excerpt above) it seems apparent that this is not the case. Throughout the latter part of the interview she repeatedly talks about 'having' to get married. It is apparent that she is undertaking this next stage of her life to satisfy her parents, to respond to community pressure and to open up the opportunity for her to perhaps go and study. For both Divya and Maya, the freedom to follow their own career path was bound up with the cultural expectation that they would first find a suitable husband. It was then a decision for the husband and his family if his wife (in the case above, Divya) would be allowed to follow her goal of studying midwifery at university. For both Maya and Divya this pressure was becoming significant as they both felt that if they reached 24 and hadn't married, they may be doomed to life as a spinster and this would have repercussions in terms of the opportunities available to them as well as their community standing.

Unpacking the justice issues in these narratives is challenging and carries with it inherent dangers, particularly as a white male. However, it is essential to attempt to do so, with the full understanding that I will not be able to understand the full depth of the issues they face in their daily life. Both Maya and Divya were generous enough to contribute their stories to this study so I am beholden to attempt to begin to try and explicate the issues that manifest in their narratives. To begin, it is apparent that, as Bhachu (1991) notes, both Maya and Divya are experiencing the tension of upholding traditional Sikh cultural values whilst experiencing the social, economic and cultural forces that act upon them in everyday British life. To be clear, it is not just in terms of their future employment that injustice manifests, but in the everyday expression of their identity in terms of their choice of clothes, how they wear their hair, who they spend time with, what they choose to do and where they choose to do that. The informal pressure to maintain respectability (and *izzat*) exerted by their community results in both these young women having to limit the expression of their individuality. Of course, it would be remiss to suggest that maintaining respectability is something that only Sikh women need be concerned with (Skeggs, 2011). But it places particular limitations on these young women in a way that extends beyond what white working-class women endure. As Fraser (2005a) notes, individuals are not:

...assigned to a single exclusive “status group,” which defines his or her standing across the board. Rather, individuals are nodes of convergence for crosscutting axes of subordination. Frequently disadvantaged along some axes and simultaneously advantaged along others, they wage struggles for recognition in a modern dynamic regime. (p452)

It is clear that these young women suffer particular status subordination by virtue of their gender combined with the specific cultural expectations attached to their ethno-religious identity.

It is this that is the most obvious manifestation of injustice in terms of the recognitional injustice caused by cultural pressures and expectations (from family and community). It is an injustice that these young women feel unable to follow their own path through life due to cultural and gender expectations that limit their ability to live a life of their own choosing. Fraser (1996) writes that ‘the institutionalized cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation must express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem’ (p54). It is clear that both Maya and Divya feel that they are unable to do so due to the cultural mores associated with their particular sect of Sikhism. It is important to recognise that the community – and the family – are institutions that can be just as oppressive as any state or government and that informal pressures can be just as stifling as any systematic coercion. The expectation that women of Maya and Divya’s caste will forego any professional ambition in order to live a domesticated life dedicated to supporting a husband, family and run the household is undoubtedly an injustice borne of androcentric norms which privilege men and is discriminatory in the extreme. But as Fraser (1995b) notes, gender structures of this sort also have political-economic dimensions, with women relegated to unpaid ‘reproductive’ and domestic labour and denied the opportunity of professional advancement, that generate exploitation, marginalisation and deprivation (not to mention a reliance on the ‘breadwinner’). Misrecognition and maldistribution intersect and combine to limit the ability of Maya and Divya to achieve participatory parity.

The requirement to utilise an intersectional lens is made even more apparent in the post-school experiences of Divya and Maya. As Divya comes from a very wealthy background, she described how there was no expectation of her to work prior to marriage. That she was working part-time for a charity was due to her own agency and

desire to do something - to feel useful and to combat the isolation and boredom she had experienced when home alone for almost two years after school doing domestic chores. On the other hand, Maya has been caring for her widowed mother whom has mental health issues and was compelled to contribute to the family finances, albeit in a job working with young children (which she described as being a culturally acceptable occupation). It would be a mistake to analyse the experiences of these two young women along recognitional lines alone. It is essential that the redistributive element be brought in to locate sites of injustice. Maya's school experience was disrupted by the pressures associated with her father passing, her mother's illness and a lack of finances during her school years, As such, Maya faced pressures that Divya did not.

It is also essential not to treat the two young women as docile or as 'empty vessels' without agency, motivation or strategies for pushing the boundaries of their situation (Bagguley and Hussain, 2016). Again, we return to the fourth 'R' of *resistance*. Although struggling with the restrictions placed on them by family and community they both resisted suitors they themselves felt unsuitable and both sought fulfilment in jobs (albeit, culturally acceptable positions) and did go out with friends (again, to culturally acceptable venues) and Divya, in particular, pushed the boundaries of appearance by wearing articles of clothing on the cusp of acceptability and styling her hair in a risqué fashion<sup>23</sup>. Both hoped for greater freedom for women of their caste in the future and both hoped to play a role in extending those freedoms. The resistance that Maya and Divya display is small in scale, but may be chipping away at the edges of what is deemed permissible for young women of their caste (Mucina, 2015). But it is important to highlight at this point that the maldistribution and misrecognition that women like Maya and Divya must endure will undoubtedly limit their ability to have a political voice. Fraser (1997a) emphasises this point when she writes that maldistribution and misrecognition:

...intertwine to reinforce each other dialectically because sexist and androcentric cultural norms are institutionalised in the state and economy, and women's economic disadvantage restricts women's 'voice,' impeding equal participation in the making of culture, in public spheres and in

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<sup>23</sup> The young woman are not allowed to wear their hair down. Divya described wearing her hair almost all the way down and clipping a tiny portion up. Likewise, regarding her clothing, Divya described not wearing a top that went below the level of her bottom and not wearing a scarf – both decisions that are frowned upon for a young woman in her community.

everyday life. The result is a vicious circle of cultural and economic subordination. (p21)

Fraser's point here is that this is the case for all women, but it is perhaps even more pointed for Maya and Divya given the limitations on their freedom as described in their narratives.

## **6.4 Representation**

The political dimension of justice is the third and final domain of justice under scrutiny here, what Fraser (2005a) calls the sphere of representation. Individuals and groups can be excluded from having a political voice by economic and cultural injustices which limit their ability to participate in the political domain. But conversely, challenging maldistribution and/or misrecognition requires actors to have adequate avenues to express and challenge such injustices. The result can be a vicious circle of subordination and domination (Fraser, 2007). For the young people in the cohort I have explored some of the ways in which they suffer maldistribution and misrecognition so it is now necessary to explore some of the ways in which they also suffer from misrepresentation.

### **6.4.1 Political cynicism**

The most dominant theme to emerge across the narratives was a deep sense of cynicism about the formal political sphere, and a lack of belief from the participants in their ability to meaningfully engage (or be listened to) within it. As other studies have found (Coffey and Farrugia, 2014; Millington, 2016) the young people's narratives here were dominated by a high degree of cynicism toward political institutions and a lack of trust in politicians, pointing to a perceived lack of external efficacy:

**Sue:** Ah cannae be bothered listening to people with all these promises. You vote for them, you get none of the shit that they promise, it's no even an issue of trust it's just stop talking shit. When you start being serious and tell the truth, mibbe I'll start voting...(long pause)...but they're all full of shit.

**Katie:** I'm just not interested, politicians, in it for the money, easy money, they a' get paid loads, they're a' stuck up as well. Aye, but what's the point? They should do something about it but I doubt they'll change anything, don't think it'll change at all. They don't care about younger people just the older people, the older generations instead of the new people. You never hear them talking about younger people...

It is apparent that their cynicism is informed by a feeling that politicians are entirely disengaged from their own lived reality of growing up in and living in Porttown. Time and again in the narratives the young people raised the issue of *disconnection* – a feeling that those in the higher reaches of politics live lives that are entirely disconnected from their own, have access to wealth that is entirely foreign to their own experiences and that they are uninterested in issues affecting them:

**Maya:** No, well, there's not a lot of...(long pause)...putting Sikh people aside, there's not a lot of BME people in parliament or MPs or anything like that, it's always white people.

**Adam:** Like, the young lassie from Glasgow or something, Mhari Black, she's good, she's always arguing the point that lower quality people aren't any different, to upper quality people, ah like to see that there isnae any difference, ah like that, we should all have the same rights and qualities and there shouldnae be any difference in what you work...[...]...they need mair young politicians, obviously they need the quality, but they need more young one's, because all these auld women and men dinnae know what they're talking about, like what's actually going on in these neighbourhoods, they dinnae know what's going on.

As Heath (2016) notes, when political parties are full of middle-class politicians, working-class voters will inevitably feel more *alienated*; 'the working class have not become incorporated within the political system – they have become more marginalized from it' (p17). It is little surprise that the young people feel a lack of external political efficacy and believe that the political institutions governing their lives are unresponsiveness to their needs and demands (Kahne and Westheimer, 2006).

It should be highlighted, however, that this disconnection, alienation and lack of external efficacy does not constitute disinterest. All the participants, to varying degrees, were able to discuss something of the contemporary political domain and how it related to their lives:

**James:** ...ah'm no into politics, ah know some stuff but ah dinnae, the reason ah dinnae get into it, how can some parts of [city] be so deprived and other parts like, beautiful. The [government office] with beautiful water fountains outside it and that, that's a complete waste of money, it's just one of those things, if I get into I'd get really pissed off, I really would, like Starbucks no paying tax, like they've got a wee office in Barbados, naw they're working here, multi-millionaire company...(long pause)...the working-class, that's who are most affected and it's us, the working-class who have to do the most to make the community thrive and we're all about community. They (*note: politicians*) dinnae understand the soul of the community 'cos they dinnae

struggle and their bairns go to [local private school]...(long pause)...they dinnae understand the sense of community, because they dinnae understand, dinnae live on these housing schemes, dinnae realise the reason kids rob hooses...(long pause)...a lot of the folk here that are working-class, the mums dinnae have enough money to send their kids to the clubs, bowling or to the cinema, they have nothing.

The interviews were punctuated by ambiguity with many of the young people reporting that they had no interest in politics in one breath, before railing against injustices within their lives or within the community in the next:

**Ed:** I don't pay attention to it, politics is something, never paid any attention, just a couple of guys sitting at a table talking about how the world is going to work, know what ah mean? Half of what they talk about is a load of shite, they don't walk around Porttown day to day...(long pause)...on saving money, budgeting, going out getting food for your bairns, or having nothing, they've got all that, they get money, they can't say they don't get good money for being in parliament, you do, if they want to go about, being in our shoes, chum me about the road...(long pause)...they are detached, they have good lives, trying to get into an average person's life, how do they know what's normal?

Again, this chimes with other research which indicates that young people, although reluctant to engage in activity such as voting, are not apathetic (Bastedo, 2015; Martin and Forde, 2017; Collins et al, 2018). Rather, it is possible again to postulate that the interest in politics combined with the scorn towards a political class deemed out of touch with the young people here can be conceived as a form of resistance to formal political representation. It could be argued that these young people are choosing to disengage from a politics that they feel alienated and disempowered by and that the only way to 'speak back' to it is by opting out. Again, it should be noted that such resistance is individualised and can be counter-productive in terms of challenging injustice but when options are severely limited, perhaps self-exclusion is the only form of agency open to young marginalised people?

Importantly, Côté (2014) notes that from a political-economic perspective the proletarianization of young people like those in this cohort sees young people marginalised from the labour force and socially excluded as a result. Misrecognition also contributes to this process as their negative stereotyping means their views can be ignored and are seen as less important than adults. And as other research suggests, without a stake in their society it would appear that these young people feel little

compunction to participate in structures which appear to them as distant and uncaring. Edmiston (2016) found in his study that exclusion from employment can have the added consequence that individuals do not feel like social citizens and are less inclined to conform to prescribed forms of responsible citizenship (such as voting). He concludes that 'the evidence suggests that social citizenship...is becoming increasingly bifurcated so that citizens are becoming 'differently equal' with respect to their status and rights' (p9). An argument can be made here that these young people, although possessing the right to participate in formal politics, are suffering from *ordinary-political misrepresentation*. Fraser (2008b) makes the point that this encompasses the 'politically institutionalized denial of participatory parity among those who are already included in principle within a bounded polity' (p76). For sure, these young people have the right (and some would argue, the ability) to participate fully in the formal political sphere. But due to issues of maldistribution and misrecognition, it is clear that these young people feel unable (or unwilling) to participate fully, as peers, in democratic structures that affect them. They feel that their elected representatives live distant lives, disconnected from their own lived experience and uninterested and unable to deal with the issues important to them. Given little avenue to have a voice and marginalised economically and socially, these young people feel isolated from the political process. It would be a mistake to simply label them as irresponsible and idle for not participating – political participation is an issue of supply and demand, as Martin (2003) questions, 'social exclusion works both ways...is anything being done to close the yawning gap between those citizens at the top and those at the bottom of our social and economic system?' (p572).

It is also important to highlight that participation is about more than formal political activity alone. When considering the participation of young people we should not privilege institutionalised and electoral politics and conceive of political participation too narrowly and overlook informal political activity (Sveningsson, 2016). However, the young people in the cohort here did not engage in informal political activity either. Only Divya discussed engaging in political discussion online, following and discussing the Black Lives Matter movement as it developed. Her participation did not develop beyond discussion on social media, however. And if we return to the examples of the likes of Simon, Sue and Val who discussed the issue of a lack of finances with which to meet



friends and participate in social activities we can see how maldistribution can impact upon these young people's ability to participate in the norms of everyday social life.

Fraser (2007) makes the crucial point that:

...structural exclusion is a grave moral wrong...the norm of parity of participation applies broadly, across all major arenas of social interaction, including family and personal life, employment and markets, formal and informal politics...because access to these arenas is so fundamental for people's well-being, I construe all of them as 'spheres of justice' ...I break with the common view that focuses exclusively on political participation, often understood very narrowly in terms of voting. For me, in contrast, the requirement of participatory parity applies broadly, in all the major arenas of social life. (p315-336)

If young people are excluded from everyday activities that many take for granted, such as meeting friends for a coffee (Sue), going to the local pub (Val), or going out at the weekend (Simon) then there is a strong argument that this is an injustice, not political in the explicit sense perhaps, but certainly one of a broader definition of participation (Andersson, 2017). Such maldistribution certainly places limitations on young people's civic participation and hardly encourages these marginalised young people to engage in the conventions of society much less offer them the kind of stake in society that may encourage participation in formal (or informal) politics (Ginwright et al, 2005; Sveningsson, 2016). As Beebeejaun (2017) notes, participation in everyday activities within the urban environment is crucial towards promoting a sense of belonging. And marginalisation in the labour market such as that experienced by all the young people in the cohort detracts from a feeling of belonging and can contribute to a feeling of social division and exclusion (Squires and Goldsmith, 2018). Fraser (2007) argues that when the institutions of society obstruct participatory parity it can create a deep sense and feeling of 'alienation from one's society and fellow actors' (p334). In this way, the spheres of maldistribution and misrepresentation overlap – economic marginalisation working to limit these young people's opportunity to achieve participatory parity in the political domain.

#### **6.4.2 Different voting in respective elections**

It is interesting to note that the young people were not entirely self-excluding from the formal political domain. One of the consequences of being a young person in Scotland preceding the period that the interviews were taking place was that they were able to

engage in referendums which appeared to speak to the young people in a way that formal party politics was unable to. Why this is the case is not entirely clear but several of the participants discussed voting in the Independence and EU Referendums but had no interest in voting in either the Scottish Parliamentary Election, local council elections or the UK General Elections:

**David:** I think it would be a lot better if we were independent. I'm only interested in it if it affects me and I thought if we left the UK it would affect me, but like, ah had to come up with ma own, what ah thought, and if we went independent...(long pause)...normal politics doesn't affect me, well...(long pause)...no, it does but it doesn't, because if you look at what they are promising, they don't do anything that they promise, they don't do it, mostly...(long pause)...or look at what type of person they are, and I don't feel like that is a good way to vote so...

**Divya:** ...the Independence referendum, you know, friends, family, we were speaking about it a lot, we watched a few debates and you know, 'cos ah thought it was really, really important, em, and in work and stuff it was the talk of the town, 'this is what's happening and this is how it's going to affect us' and like ah said, it was all over the news and TV, it was just a massive thing, and that's why I thought, I better get out and vote, 'cos you know, so that was why I voted, I've not got an issue with voting, I'm not going to vote for something I don't know, 'cos that's not fair on anybody, so if I was to go and vote about the EU but had no clue what's happening either way, 'cos my one vote could make a decision, so I would never, ever do that, as long as I'm informed and have enough information to make a decision, that's when I go and vote, rest of the time, I just don't take an interest... \*laughs\* ...I don't know, ah just didn't know enough about it, and ah just didn't have enough, like, I wasn't like, this is what is happening if you vote in the General Election or whatever, whereas with the EU and stuff like that it was everywhere, in every newspaper and on Twitter, the feed was just mental, on the news, every day it was all about that, in work it was all about it, what's happening in the EU so that was why I thought it was an important thing.

The EU and Independence Referendums offered an immediate and tangible promise of change that party elections did not. Again, this would appear to be bound up in the young people's disconnection and felt sense of powerlessness in the formal political domain of party politics. The Referendums on the other hand, offered a sense of power and of political agency. It appears that there are three factors at play here. First, the referendums offered them a sense that their vote mattered – a simple majority was enough to win the day and decide the future direction of the country's constitutional future therefore the young people felt that their vote 'counted' (Crowther et al, 2018). Second, the information on offer was ubiquitous and thus they felt more informed and

empowered to have their say. Again, this hints that if young people were properly armed with information then they might be more likely to participate in the formal political domain. Thirdly, although not explicitly stated by the young people in the cohort, it may be the case that referendums sidestep politicians to some degree and this results in less cynicism and less resistance. The point here is that the young people are not entirely excluded from the formal political sphere, but formal party politics certainly appears exclusionary. Fraser (2014b) contends that 'public opinion is legitimate if and only if it results from a communicative process in which all potentially affected can participate as peers, regardless of political citizenship' (p31). The evidence presented here suggests that this is not the case and that these young people feel excluded from the day-to-day decision-making processes that affect their lives, marginalising them from the formal political process.

Another consequence of the young people's marginalisation and the direct result of what Fraser (2015) terms the de-democratisation of our politics is a rise in right-wing extremist views gaining legitimacy. This was the case for several of the young people in this study, who blamed immigrants for the lack of work and the lack of housing for young local people:

**Donna:** ...it's aw these immigrants coming into this country and stealing everybody's jobs, ken whit ah mean? Like, a know that folk on JSA are seen like junkies, as lazy as they cannae go dae this and that, but you cannae get jobseekers unless you show them that you've applied for jobs every week, or you dinnae get jobseekers. Like, if see we had just Scottish people in this country every person would have a job but they're bringing aw these different immigrants in that are opening different shops but it's finding, like see ma wee sister and that, aye she's had two jobs but she's going to find it very, very hard because she's no done any exams, she's going to find it very, very hard to get a job, ken?

**Craig:** ...like, aw the foreigners getting jobs...(long pause)...that's a BIG issue...

As Mieriņa and Koroļeva (2015) write, their research finds that:

Living in poverty or seeing poverty facilitates negative attitudes towards minorities and significantly increases xenophobia, welfare chauvinism and exclusionism, especially if immigration rates are high. Far right ideology is especially appealing to groups of society who experience a higher level of insecurity and perceived competition. (p199)

If we return to the beginning of the chapter and acknowledge the difficult circumstances that the majority of the young people in this study grew up in and acknowledge the marginalisation they now face in the labour market, it is perhaps surprising that only a few of the participants hold this viewpoint. For Fraser (2015) the regression to nationalism and racism is an intrinsic aspect of financialised capitalism as the hegemonic common-sense of neo-liberalism, she argues, has been largely unopposed. The vacuum on the Left has left the door open for the all-too-easy scapegoating of foreign nationals:

On the surface, at least, the political common-sense of our time offers the subjects of financial capitalism few interpretive resources for transformative mobilization. On the contrary, it articulates easily, if not fully consistently, with retrograde nationalisms and racisms, which usurp much of the discursive space for opposition...the same gesture that enshrines the good subject as the one who maximizes his/her human capital also generates as its flip side racialized icons of defective agency and personal irresponsibility...such notions offer low-hanging fruit for the distractions of scapegoating, encouraging the substitution of identity-political antagonisms for a structural-institutional critique of a system in crisis. (p183-4)

Robinson (2016) notes that the neo-fascist Right have been emboldened by the recent election of Trump in the US and that they have been quick to exploit the increased insecurity of white working-class communities. The important point here in terms of the implications for social justice is that the politics of identity once again provide an easier explanation for what are, in reality, far more complex structural issues which are working to marginalise these young people and limiting their opportunity to have a voice. Fraser (2016d) charges that the domination of what she terms 'progressive neo-liberalism' (of which young people *were* a fundamental component) has effectively abandoned the working-class leaving the door open for the cultivation of right-wing populism. Maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation working in unison. Given their lack of political education and engagement along with their economic marginalisation, it is perhaps unsurprising that many are reaching for the all-too-easy scapegoating of foreign nationals given the poisonous discourse surrounding foreign workers and minority ethnic groups in much of the mainstream media in the UK today (EHRC, 2016; Deuchar and Bhopal, 2017).

### 6.4.3 Lack of political education

The third and final theme to emerge from the interviews is that many of the young people felt a lack of internal efficacy, a self-perception that they lacked the knowledge and tools to participate in formal politics. Many felt that school offered very little in the way of a political education to prepare them for engaging in activities such as voting and arming them with a critical ability to engage in political arguments and to better prepare them to make decisions on whom to vote for:

**Lana:** We didn't really learn about politics at school, not really, I did Modern Studies where we learned about it but that was more like voting systems and...(long pause)...American voting systems and we never really looked at the different parties, so to speak.

**Maya:** When ah was at school we weren't involved in politics, no discussions, or debates, nothing. I would have liked to have been more knowledgeable about it, but it's always, ah think now, with the work that ah do, there's a lot more involvement, but when ah was a kid, there was nothing, yeah, ah don't think it was focused as much on how our system works, em, but like, we did, an intro to modern studies, it wasn't very intense, not based on the UK.

This combination of a subjective sense of a lack of internal efficacy combined with the lack of external efficacy points to a potent combination limiting these young people's ability and willingness to participate in the representational domain. Fraser (2012a) suggests that a truly informed citizenship is essential to a healthy and burgeoning public sphere. Placing the blame on the young people for their lack of engagement in this way would appear to be an injustice as:

...we should understand, rather, that organized opposition to injustice depends on the availability of discursive resources and interpretative schemas that permit its articulation and open expression. We should examine the public sphere for biases that impede equal access to political voice, and figure out how to overcome them, by broadening the terms available for naming social problems and disputing their causes. (p51)

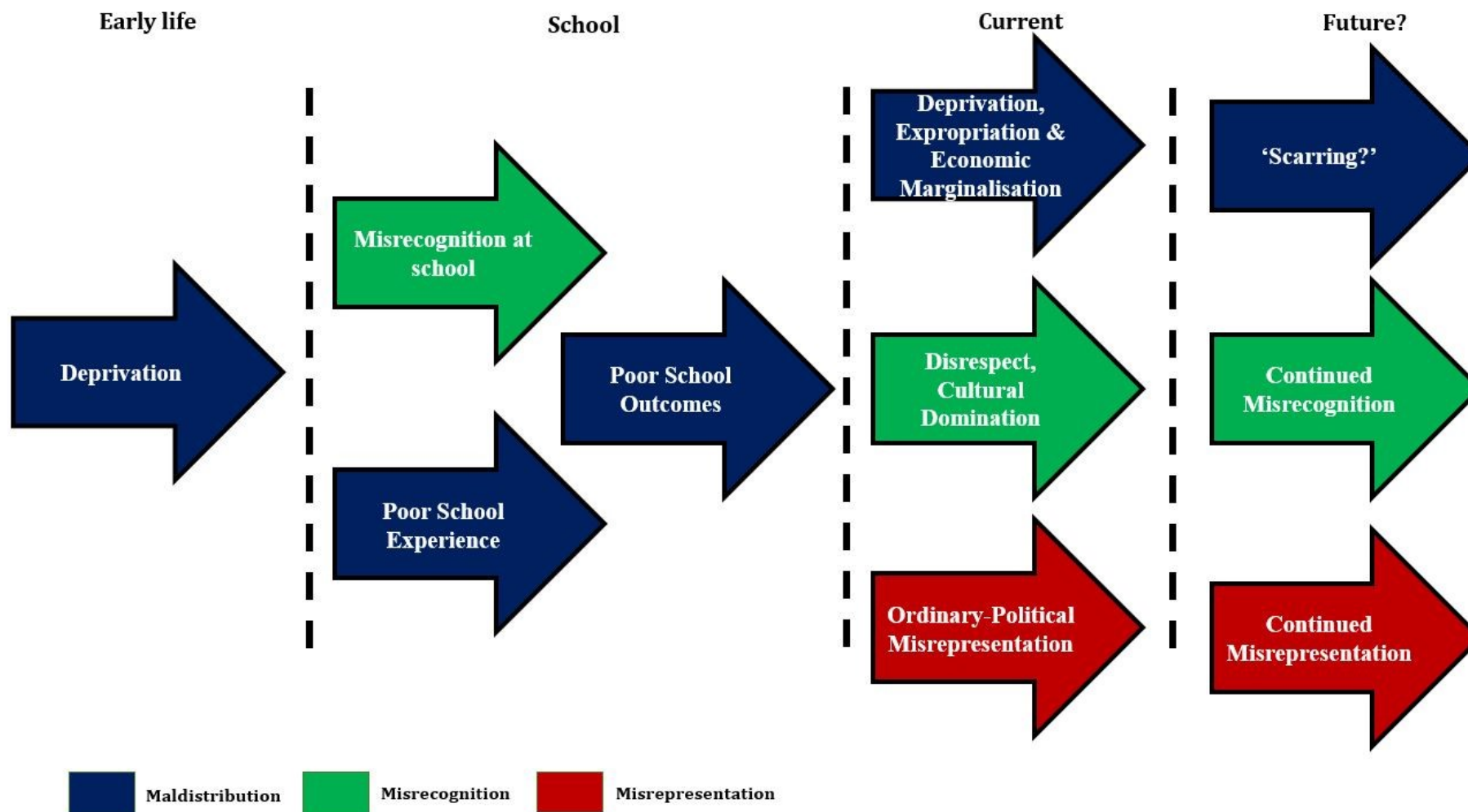
For these young people it constitutes an injustice that they have not been adequately prepared for political engagement upon their leaving school. Certainly it is an impediment to participatory parity if the young people feel unable to engage in political decision-making on a par with other citizens. Biesta and Lawy (2006) make the crucial point that a genuine citizenship education should 'facilitate a critical examination of the actual conditions of young people's citizenship, even though it may lead them to the

conclusion that their own citizenship is limited and restricted' (p77). However, given that many of these young people effectively disengaged from school well before their official leaving date it is not clear that they would have participated in political education whilst there. However, the testimony of the young people in this study chimes with that of other research which suggests that schools are not playing their part in preparing young people in terms of arming them with the 'discursive resources and interpretative schemas' that would enable them to better participate in formal politics (Stewart et al, 2014; Eichhorn, 2018).

## **6.5 Discussion and conclusion**

These young people have endured deprivation from an early age and this experience has significantly shaped their lives. If we analyse their experiences as set out in this chapter we can witness 'a flow of injustice' that has dictated their life path so far and these feed into one another, beginning with their experience of childhood deprivation (figure 2). This maldistribution and the misrecognition that flows from this has resulted in a largely negative experience at school. This has then translated into poor educational outcomes which has then resulted in their marginalisation in the contemporary labour market. These young people then suffer the insult of misrecognition, subject to disrespectful stereotyping, seen as drains on the state, skivers and scroungers lost in a sea of moral turpitude. Devoid of any stake in society, it is unsurprising that these young people are turning their back on formal politics. When the very systems that should be supporting these young people are instead turned against them in the form of punitive sanctions and the whip-hand of the welfare state (as well as the aforementioned discriminatory language used in popular discourse), it is difficult to blame their snubbing of the formal political system. However, rather than seeing this as a fault within the young people, the spotlight should instead be shone on the multiple sites of injustice that are shaping their lives.

This chapter reveals a deeply woven web of injustices that are working in unison to cement these young people's marginalisation, what I term the 'vicious circles of injustice' (figure 3). And this is where the complexity of the situation is truly revealed and Fraser's model allows us to elucidate the issues at play. Redistribution and recognition interact, as a combination of deprivation and economic marginalisation sees



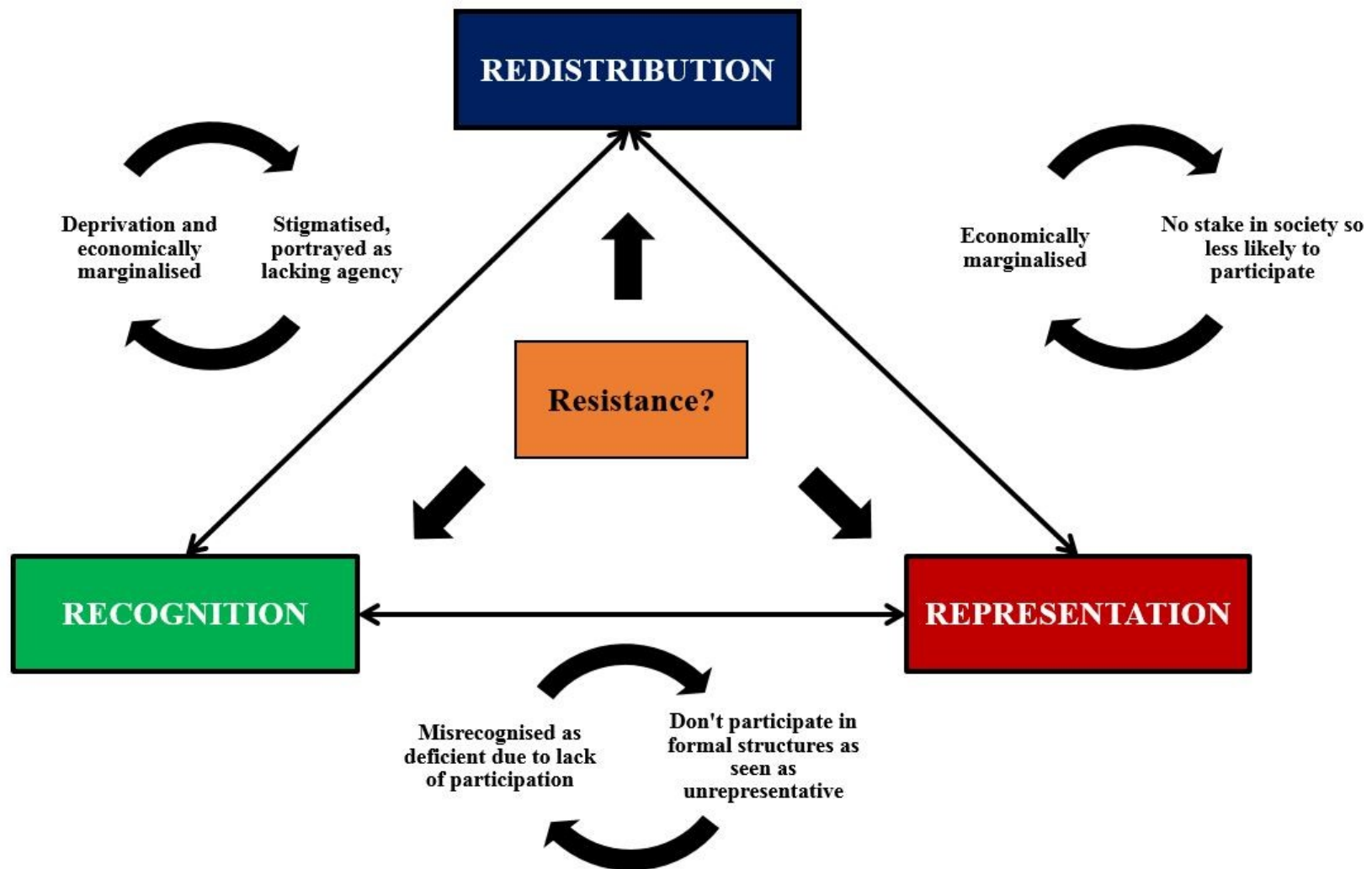
**Figure 2** - The flow of injustice

young people held as responsible for their 'failure' to make a smooth transition from school to work. They are ripe for expropriation. An added insult of this is the aforementioned disrespectful stereotyping they suffer, despite their struggles to succeed. This misrecognition along with the popular belief that young people are generally less deserving of the full benefits of citizenship (as 'human becomings') sees them receive less in the way of financial support from the state (Daniel, 2014). Maldistribution and misrecognition acting in a vicious circle.

Recognition and representation operate in tandem as young people do not participate in formal politics due to their seeing it as unrepresentative of their lived experience – a form of cultural domination. However, this lack of participation is put down to their apathy and selfishness and as a consequence, their lack of participation can be easily dismissed (Wood, 2010; Shukra, 2017). Rather than focusing on the structural issues that are working to impede their participatory parity, the spotlight is trained, again, on perceived individual deficiency. Misrecognition and misrepresentation acting in a vicious circle. Representation and redistribution work together as young people feel they do not have a stake in society and this undermines their willingness to participate in society. Deprivation, inequality and their economic marginalisation detract from a sense of belonging which detracts from motivation to participate in the structures which circumscribe their lives (Katznelson, 2017). Their lack of participation however, means that any opportunity to challenge the very structures which are working to marginalise them is shut down. Misrepresentation and maldistribution acting in a vicious circle.

And as alluded to earlier in the chapter, these interpenetrating spheres of injustice are operating in such a way that leaves the young people ripe for expropriation. The imbrication of maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation are working in a way that leaves young people economically and socially marginalised and with no way in which to challenge this state of affairs in the political domain. They are powerless to challenge the very structures that are operating to leave them expropriable. The consequence of this situation is felt *now* in terms of their marginalisation to the secondary labour market. The danger is that this marginalisation will have a long-term scarring effect and they will carry this into later life and their expropriation will continue. The misrecognition which operates alongside their labour market





**Figure 3** - The vicious circles of injustice

marginalisation is left intact and the 'scrounger' narrative continues unabated. The ability to challenge this popular portrayal is compromised by their political ostracism. Consequently, the welfare state is turned against these young people and they can be compelled to participate in workfare programmes which contribute to their expropriation – forced to work in poor programmes on pain of losing even the most meagre of social security entitlement. And such arrangements have popular support, in large part because of their misrecognition and the demonization of 'welfare queens' (Fraser, 1998).

The major difficulty that these young people face is that the result of these interactions means that interrupting the cycles of injustice is extremely challenging. Interceding in one sphere is unlikely to have the effect of causing the entire cycle to grind to a halt. As Fraser (2007) notes:

Just as the ability to make claims for distribution and recognition depends on relations of representation, so the ability to exercise political voice depends on the relations of class and status. Thus, maldistribution and misrecognition conspire to subvert the principle of equal political voice for every citizen, even in polities that are formally democratic. It follows that efforts to overcome injustice cannot, except in rare cases, address the relations of representation alone. On the contrary, struggles against misrepresentation cannot succeed unless they are joined with struggles against maldistribution and misrecognition – and vice versa...my own preference is for the slogan, 'no redistribution or recognition without representation'. (p333)

Any measure or wider campaign seeking to remedy this situation, therefore, must seek to simultaneously address the multiple injustices that these young people face in order to break this vicious circle – no easy task. But only by identifying those barriers to their participatory parity could a counter-narrative begin to emerge and one rooted in the micro-politics of the experience of young people themselves. Of course, it should also be noted that young people are not a homogenous group and just like any other group in society the effect of injustice impacts along a variety of dimensions (Fraser, 2003).

When considering the social injustices young people face it is always imperative to consider the intersectional issues at play. The young people in this cohort had issues specific to their own identities and these are cross-cut with issues of class, gender, race and disability. But equally the young people in this study share some commonality of experience by virtue of their status as young people; labour market marginalisation, misrecognition by virtue of their age and a felt exclusion from the domain of politics.

This is not to say that these issues exclusively impact on youth but these issues have particular manifestations for young people.

It is also important to highlight the micro-acts of resistance that the young people are displaying in retaliation to these injustices. Fraser's framework is an extremely useful way to analyse and tease out the multiple structural injustices impacting on the young people. But it is also crucial to think of the ways in which young people respond to – and act through – the structural impediments that circumvent their lives (Coffey and Farrugia, 2014). Therefore, it is useful to add a fourth 'R' to the centre of the framework when applying it to young people in order to keep in mind the ways in which they respond to injustice (figure 3). On the evidence presented here, the processes of individualisation combined with the multiple injustices these young people face in their everyday life collude to shut down the possibility of a more unified and collective resistance to the injustices shaping their lives. Resistance in this sense is not the collective action that highlights injustice and poses a direct challenge to oppression but a form of resilience that enables them to endure their marginalised circumstances (Katz, 2004). It is the act of an individual, prolonged and 'something that resides much more in the ordinary processes of 'everyday life' (Smyth, 2016: 136). Bayat (2000) talks of 'quiet encroachment' whereby ordinary people silently talk back to the dominant forces influencing their lives. The acts described in this chapter may be small in nature, and seemingly counter-productive on occasion (certainly in terms of combating injustice). But shorn of a collective power that could offer a more potent challenge to the structural impediments they are experiencing, it is difficult to conceive of alternative means and methods. Maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation are collaborating to shut down any possibility of these young people offering a more organised, collective or subversive opposition (Prasad and Prasad, 1998).

It is too much to ask the practitioners working with these young people to enact the sort of transformative agenda that Fraser (2007) envisions would challenge these multiple injustices. As noted, youth work is a practice committed to addressing social injustice in the lives of young people (Sercombe, 2010; Taylor, 2015; Wood et al, 2015). Thus, it is interesting to investigate if the practitioners in this study are able to work in a way that addresses the injustices described in this chapter. It is to the practitioners that I now turn.

## **Chapter 7 – Youth work practice: Starting where policy is at**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter analysed the multiple obstacles that the young people in this study face with regard to participatory parity. The question that this chapter explores is how the practitioners are addressing these issues? Specifically, exploring if there are contradictions for the practitioners in the ‘squeeze’ between policy directives from above and the social justice needs of these young people from below. Are they able to develop a practice which responds to the needs of the young people, as highlighted in the previous chapter?

As discussed in chapter 4, the evidence from literature paints a picture of practitioners struggling to meet the competing demands of a policy agenda aimed at ensuring young people are economically active and the immediate social justice needs of those they work with. Of course, such a dichotomy may be an oversimplification, as the previous chapter reveals young people themselves appear to prioritise their economic marginalisation. However, the evidence suggests practitioners are working with young people toward pre-determined outcomes demanded by funding bodies rather than ‘starting where the young people are at’, a core feature of youth work practice (Scottish Government, 2014a; Davies, 2015; Coussée, 2016). In this chapter, Fraser’s framework is utilised as a lens to analyse and understand the context within which the practitioners interviewed for this study are operating. I argue that it is a useful framework for questioning whether or not practitioners are truly able to intercede in issues of injustice impacting on the lives of those they work with.

The interviews with the practitioners were, for the most part, unfavourable and pessimistic regarding their ability to respond to issues of injustice. The major themes that emerged from data are; a lack of necessary resources, the impact of ever-tightening outcome-focused practice; the focus of the ‘positive destination’ agenda; an ever increasing workload of paperwork and the impact of working in partnerships. All of these factors are limiting the ability of these practitioners to ‘start where young people are at.’

## 7.2 Purpose

In all of the interviews the practitioners themselves vocalised a commitment to addressing issues of social justice in their practice. This was one of the primary motivations for them becoming involved in professional sector. They talked of seeking to combat poverty, inequality, discrimination and racism. In the interviews when asked why they did the work, Alice and Will explained:

**Alice:** Most importantly, it's the young person that comes first, that is, eh, massively part of, why I do the work, so definitely equality is up there, it's such a broad, em, word ah suppose but it's something that ah feel is so important, that every child has, they do have the potential to achieve whatever they want to, if it's within their reach and we can support them to do that, there shouldn't be any barriers to stop them, I think that's the most important one, for me anyway, yeah, probably social justice.

**Will:** ...that would be another value, is ma commitment to, I suppose it's social justice issues, it's equality, it's making sure people are able to give something if they can offer it, they should be provided the space to develop it.

The practitioners extolled a commitment to the care, welfare and well-being of the young people they worked with, which was palpable in the interviews. All the practitioners in the study discussed this. Frank and Will, for example:

**Frank:** Ah'm driven to, just help people. I left ma 28 grand a year job at the Water Board to do this, ah went fae £28,000 to £11,000. I love youth work man, I cannae see myself daein anything else...

**Will:** I love working with people, ah love meeting and working with people, whether it's young people, older people, parents groups, kids in school...(long pause)...there's nothing better than when you have a really positive session and they've gotten involved and engaged.

As Davies (2013) also found in his study in England, these youth workers, despite the pressures of a changing policy environment, still maintain a deep and passionate commitment to working with the young people they come into contact with. Frank in the example above, for example, gave up a more lucrative job in order to pursue a career in youth work. Others discussed their own positive experiences of youth work as participants, and the difference it made in their lives growing up:

**Catherine:** I was brought up in in Glasgow, life was really, really challenging and youth work, having these places to go I really saw the value in, and places that are safe and being around other people it was something that was

really beneficial for me...ah'd love to change the world, but, I want to improve people's lives or help people to improve their lives.

As de St Croix (2016a) also found, it appears that the workers 'wish to make a genuine difference to young people's lives; this was not presented as coming from an outside 'do-gooder' position but as rooted in personal experience' (p57). Dunne et al (2014) also found in their review of youth work across Europe that practitioners are motivated toward a commitment to bring about positive change in the lives of the young people they work with. This was readily apparent across all the practitioner interviews in this study.

### **7.3 Lack of resources**

As I explored in the previous chapter, the expressed needs of the young people are cross-cut with, issues of social justice as conceptualised by Fraser. In this study, there is evidence of economic marginalisation, a lack of recognition and exclusion from the political sphere. It was apparent from the interviews with the practitioners that although they identified these issues as critical in the lives of the young people they worked with, they felt, in the main, unable to work with the young people to begin to address them, due to a lack of resources. For example, when asked if the work they undertook addresses issues of social justice, Anna stated that she was unable to do so, as finance was tightly tied to funding with specific demands to meet:

**Anna:** We're at a point where I don't have the money or resources to do anything extra so that the only way you could really do social justice work with young people is just to say, right, poverty's an issue for you, let's all turn up and do a project on it, right? But then it's like, you can't do that anymore because, we've not got the time, we've not got the resources, and, to apply for funding for that you're, you may as well be trying to swim the blooming channel or something, there's too many specific targets that you have to fit, it's a joke, really.

This was the major theme which reflected across the practitioner interviews. The increasing attachment of pre-determined targets and outcomes was stifling their ability of 'starting where young people are at' and, as a consequence, hindering their capacity to address issues of social justice. Added to this, all the practitioners discussed swingeing cuts to their budget over the last few years which had a direct impact on their ability to deliver services for the young people they work with. For example:

**Frank:** We're on a 63% drop of what we've asked for...\*sighs\*...oh God, we asked for a pot of money and we got 63% less than what we asked for. The year before that we had to take, we took an 8% drop but we were expecting 15% but, we used to be able to have open access, em, open access here for kids who wanted to come in just off the street just rather than come to the drop in, we used to have walk-ins 5 days a week, now it's only 2, so that...(long pause)...and the walk ins are chock-a-block...

**Catherine:** We never got a funding application that we applied for, we're running on our bare bones to be honest, we've got one group running at the moment and that's it, so it's my job to get things up and running with no staff...[...]...they had to make drastic cuts just to save the organisation but we're all under the impression that these are short-term.

In both these instances we can see a direct impact on front-line services for young people, something that was experienced by all the practitioners. Such a scenario is not exclusive to the projects participating in this research as cuts to youth services have been a reality across the whole of the UK as austerity has bitten deep (Chadderton and Colley, 2012; McGregor, 2015). Alice and Will both described losing jobs and much needed hours due to sudden funding cuts. Anna and Ella both discussed doing additional hours beyond their contracted time in order to provide the kind of services they felt unable to deliver due to time constraints:

**Anna:** ...I'd rather work 45 hours a week and keep focus of what ah'm doing than, doing ma 30 hours a week and going home and feeling like all ah was doing was meeting employability targets and like, do you know? Ah would really struggle with it...

**Ella:** ...we're kind of expected to do the work of one and a half people, that's what it always ends up working out as, it always ends up working like that, the things that end up being the most beneficial for young people in my role are, I might not get paid to do it but these are the extras that we want to do because we know it'll be good for the young people.

This was something that de St. Croix (2016a) also found in her study, practitioners going beyond 'just doing their job due to a love, passion and commitment to the job and 'genuine care for the young people' (p55). Despite the cuts to their hours and the precarious nature of their contractual situation, the commitment of all the practitioners is not in question. The argument being made here is that it is the structural issues surrounding the sector that are preventing these workers from responding to the injustice in the lives of the young people. All of the practitioners in this study described doing extra hours above and beyond what they are contracted to do in order to meet the needs and demands of the young people they serve. A situation de St Croix (*Ibid*) terms

the 'exploitation of emotional labour.' She goes on to say 'youth workers' passion for their work encourages them to go along with policies against their principles in order to preserve their job and keep services open for young people' (p16). This was certainly the case here, too.

#### **7.4 The tightening of funding**

The practitioners made the point during the interviews that the funding landscape had increasingly tightened over the past decade. As a result, finding the room to work in a way that would allow them to support young people to address immediate issues in their life was becoming increasingly difficult. Ella and Alice stated:

***Ella:*** The space is there, the funding is definitely tightening, just the sheer capacity of what we're expected to do and obviously the paperwork that we're expected to do...

***Alice:*** ...we need to keep our jobs and we need to make money to survive as well, so, we do just go with what funding says. All I keep thinking is that stuff is getting worse and ah don't know how to stop it and ah don't have an answer, it's not that I really get the chance to develop the work with the young person. So no, I really don't. [Have the flexibility to respond to young people's immediate needs]

Again, this is something that appears to be being experienced across the UK as funding criteria increasingly comes with strict outcome measures that are expected to be fulfilled. Davies and Merton (2009) highlight policy interventions 'have become increasingly prescriptive, intrusive and controlling' (p22).

This was very much in evidence in this study. A large part of the seven interviews were taken up by discussions around the pressures associated with providing evidence of the work that they do with young people. It was clear that the influence of the managerialist agenda surrounding youth work was not felt to be an entirely positive development and was, indeed, becoming ever more difficult to challenge. Mason (2015) argues that this is part of a trend which has seen youth work increasingly marketised as part of the 'neo-liberal project' – with outcome measures and competitive funding arrangements said to play a large part in compromising the character of youth work. The issue of targets and outcome measures is an obvious source of frustration for the practitioners, for many reasons. The first relates to the prescriptiveness of these targets which inhibited the



ability of the practitioners to respond to the immediate needs of the young people they work with:

**Anna:** I mean obviously with the funding we've got a specific target to meet around anti-social behaviour and criminal activity but, you just have to provide evidence that you've been carrying out educational work that's looking to combat and prevent them engaging in anti-social behaviour.

**Ella:** We've got in our head we need to move them on, so we're thinking we need to be doing CV building and this and that, 'cos that is what we need to do, we need to get them into jobs because that's what our targets are saying.

As other studies have found, what is particularly interesting about these examples is that in both cases there is a clear tension between (1) the work being focused on the expressed requirements of the funders, and (2) trying to focus the work on what they see as more responsive to the needs of the young people (Tyler, 2009; Lehal, 2010; Sercombe, 2010; Coburn and Wallace, 2011; Schild et al, 2017). It is this notion of 'starting where young people are at' that is the most threatened by the performative turn and the one that has the most significant impact on youth practitioners in terms of their ability to respond to the social justice issues impacting on the lives of the young people they work with. Of course, there is nothing new here and such tensions have existed for some time in youth work. What is significant however, is the feeling that the demands are becoming increasingly tighter and more specific whereby these practitioners have less space and freedom to undertake work that would perhaps be more responsive to the young people's immediate needs:

**Sarah:** In the last 10 years or whatever, the funding streams have changed so much that you're kind of, connected to different pots of funding, different outcomes to meet. Which can get a wee bit messy. It felt a wee bit freer, you know when I started here, but now it seems, it's more like a jigsaw puzzle so there's lots more of different, smaller funders, three different funders funding one project, but all of those have different outcomes and different targets, so you're doing, you're working with the same people, doing the same job, but having to hit different targets for the different funders and that is, it can get really, really tricky and it's a lot of stress.

Such time-intensive procedures inevitably mean that practitioners spend less time working with young people and less time conceiving of new ways to engage with the young participants. The evidence from the practitioners here suggests that the policy agenda is 'winning' and work that could – at least to some degree – address social inequality is struggling to get a look in.

Of course, if they do not meet the demands of funders, the danger is their project will lose the possibility of being considered for future funding (and by extension, they themselves could potentially lose their jobs). The nature of the youth work sector means that practitioners themselves are often in positions of precarity, as their own position is dependent on their project securing funding (Dunne et al, 2014; de St. Croix, 2018). This was the case for all seven practitioners here. They discussed the direct impact of this in their work. Catherine, for example, discussed ‘forcing’ young people to fulfil the Duke of Edinburgh award as that was an expectation of funders:

**Catherine:** When you’re dealing with issues like arranged marriages you do need somewhere where you can come and ah don’t think that is something that we have, and ah think for young people that is something that is underestimated how important that is. And more informal work...(long pause)...not forcing people into doing programmes that they don’t want to do. While we were doing Duke of Edinburgh, ah think ah was working with 40 young people and about 5% of them wanted to do it. That and the Dance Leadership award and ah feel, there was also a lot of paperwork, to do all that with people that don’t want to do it... \*laughs\*...

Catherine went on to contrast this with the work that she felt the organization should have been doing and this coming from the expressed needs of the young Sikh women she works with. Not only providing a space for young Sikh women simply to *be*, as in the above example, but addressing the complex gender issues that loomed large in the lives of her participants. Indeed, the organisation aims to support Sikh women to address sensitive cultural issues as well as providing individualised employability opportunities:

**Catherine:** ...ah’m not criticising the board, they have to understand what we’re doing, their backgrounds, understand numbers, attendances and all that kind of thing much better, hard outcomes, rather than ‘oh this person came this week and when they started they wouldn’t talk to anyone and they used to cover their face because they didn’t like anyone to look at them and now they’re up there dancing on a stage’ and they don’t always see that part of the journey and that’s a difficult one to evidence but that is what happens, there is a big tension.

It was apparent throughout the interview with Catherine that there was a deep sense of frustration at the lack of resources and the funding restrictions which meant she was unable to carry out the kind of work she wanted to do which would respond to the immediate life experiences of the young Sikh women. And given one of the key aims of the organization is to ‘empower’ the young women the focus on vocational qualifications to the detriment of these immediate experiences limits Catherine’s

opportunity to intercede and address issues of cultural injustice. It was apparent throughout the interview with Catherine that there exists a tension between the needs of the young people she works with, the demands of the project and the nature of the work she is being tasked to undertake.

### **7.5 The impact on relationship building**

The second issue relating to the performative turn for the practitioners is the way that it is compromising their ability to cultivate authentic relationships with young people. All seven practitioners were committed to developing meaningful relationships with young people, seeing this as the starting point for any productive work:

***Ella:*** We know what works is just doing youth work and just developing good relationships, doing issue-based stuff and finding out what is going on in their lives and making them more confident and having a good relationship with them, ah just think like, most of the young people we're working with it should be like, finding out what they are interested in, getting them in to something they enjoy so it's really about developing their life experiences.

In the above example, not only does Ella highlight the importance of relationship building, she also cites the idea of 'finding out what is going on in their lives.' This is one of the core purposes of youth work, and a quality which is said to separate the practice from other state-sponsored welfare services (Scottish Government, 2014a). The principle of relationship building is absolutely essential to a practitioner's ability to address issues of injustice. This separates the practice from other welfare services and offers youth work practitioners a privileged place in the lives of young people. It allows them to build 'the conditions of trust required for the young people to disclose sensitive or difficult issues to us' (Wood et al, 2015: 42). How can a practitioner begin to address issues of injustice if they do not know what is going on in a young person's life? If we take David from this study as an example, the question is this; how can a practitioner intercede in addressing his mental health issues if they do not know that the deprivation his family is facing is causing (and has caused) him intolerable stress? And if the practitioner is not able to begin working with him at his pace, allowing for a relationship-building phase, then the likelihood of him disclosing such a sensitive issue could be greatly reduced. This was a point also raised in the interview with Anna:

**Anna:** ...just building relationships with them so they actually trust you to help them through these things...(long pause)...trust, a lot of these young people it's non-existent because they've been let down so much in the past, so I suppose like, my main aim is probably try and build relationships with them.

Sennett (2006) talks about the 'hollowing out' of artistry and expertise in our fast-changing, 'speeded-up' institutions and there are parallels here for the practitioners. For Anna, the lack of resources and the stricter conditions she is working under in terms of the funding targets and outcomes she must meet, mean she is struggling to address the immediate needs of the young people. The craft of relationship-building takes time, particularly with marginalised young people, but this is challenging in a landscape dominated by short-term funding which seeks immediate returns on investment. Anna's commitment to fostering relationships cannot be questioned, but her ability to do so – by her own admission – appears compromised. And this is the case for all of the practitioners in this study.

Sarah and Ella discussed the different dynamic that the employability agenda has introduced into their practice, particularly in terms of their relationships with young people, as a youth worker. As an example, Ella described a dilemma presented by the positive destination agenda, which has been exacerbated more recently by the introduction of the EMA. As one of the employability 'hubs' in the city, Sarah and Ella's project is responsible for monitoring the attendance of those young people on an Activity Agreement. They have to report whether or not the young people are fulfilling the hours necessary each week (a minimum of 4hrs) to qualify for their EMA. For Sarah this works to undermine one of the foundational principles of youth work as described in chapter 4 – the 'voluntary principle':

**Sarah:** I think my type of youth work at the minute, where I am with the employability focus, I don't think that's as voluntary as these principles would like it to be, I think there is a pressure on young people to be doing something to get their EMA...(long pause)...that's another change in my role, it used to be very voluntary, people would come and see you if they wanted to come.

Ella went further, suggesting that the dynamic of the EMA altered the relationship to the point where she feels it undermined the entire youth work ethos of the project. Like Sarah, she noted the shift in the disciplinary dynamic which made the relationship more like a child/parent rather than one of partnership:

**Ella:** It's not youth work. To me it's not youth work, paying young people, the bit I don't like is that the only work I can get with this age group just now is employability work, you know? It makes you more like a nagging Mum, aye you do just feel like you're nagging them and it's not what youth work is all about, you know? Employability in general, we just started doing it because we were working with young people who were getting to the age where they were needing jobs and stuff and they were requesting our help because we had a good relationship with them.

The tension for Ella in this extract is almost palpable. The contrast between the voluntary principle that is said to underwrite youth work and the move to her feeling like a 'nagging mum' that the responsibility the EMA brings is obviously a difficulty that she is wrestling with. Indeed, to the point where she feels what she is doing is 'not youth work.' Whereas initially the project ran employment focused sessions in response to the expressed need of the young people and had its foundation in the building of relationships it was evident that this was no longer the case. The problem in terms of justice here is that the dynamic introduced by the EMA impinges on the ability of practitioners to build trusting relationships with the young people. The combination of target-driven work and a level of apparent compulsion attached to the young people attending the employability sessions with Ella and Sarah is undoubtedly creating tensions for them both. It is clear that this type of performative agenda has negative implications for the informal and youth-centred practice that is useful for furthering social justice objectives.

## **7.6 'Positive destinations'**

The language of 'positive destinations' has become ubiquitous in Scottish policy over the last decade as youth unemployment has become an increasing concern in Scotland, particularly in the aftermath of the financial crisis. The economic downturn that followed the Great Recession of 2008 saw youth unemployment rates peak at 22% (from 12% pre-recession). As highlighted in chapter 4 a great number of assorted policy documents and papers have been published by the Scottish Government focusing on addressing the issue. The discourse of positive destinations is a major feature of these documents, and practitioners working with young people now find that a major plank of their work is ensuring young people are engaged in some form of formal post-school activity. Throughout the interviews with the practitioners it was apparent that this focus was having a significant influence on the work they are doing and none spoke of

this in a positive way. Only Frank in his role in the health project has side-stepped the positive destination agenda. Despite only Sarah and Ella working in explicitly employability-based roles, all the practitioners noted that responding to the agenda had assumed a central part of their role. For Alice, the language of positive destinations is now so prevalent that she uses it herself and it functions to frame the work that she is now doing. This despite her questioning the logic behind it:

**Alice:** Yeah, we use the word positive destinations a lot, funders and on some of our stats sheets, we do laugh when we say the words positive destinations, 'cos it's just one of those buzz words that are chucked about, what does it really mean?...\*laughs\*...is it really positive for sign-posting someone, not really, they might still be in the same place that they were, but you get to count that as positive 'cos you've sign posted them. And just because you think it's positive how do you know the young person thinks it's positive, I don't know, I think it's just one of these buzz words that we've become hooked on saying all the time that we, em, but yeah, and I find myself using it and I hate myself for saying it. I'm not a fan but I think that's just the kind of language now, and language is such a powerful thing, but it's the language that is drummed into us.

Fairclough (2001) refers to 'discourse driven' social change, where language takes on an increasing importance and this has seen 'more conscious attempts to shape it and control it to meet institutional or organizational objectives' (p231). Language is seen as a form of 'social practice' and in this sense is far from benign, as it is shaped by institutions and social structures but helps to shape them in return. As Fairclough and Wodak (1997) point out:

...discourse is socially constitutive as well as shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially influential, it gives rise to important issues of power. (p258)

The power of language in this case is such that it permeates down to practice level, shaping not only the work that Alice is undertaking, but the way she speaks about it.

Catherine is in a similar position, citing the negative influence she feels the pursuit of positive destinations is having on her ability to shape the work her project does. Far from being able to respond to the individual and specific needs of her target group - young Sikh women - she instead finds herself rolling out a training programme to all the participants in order to aid the participant's achievement of accreditation:

**Catherine:** Well...\*sighs\*...there is a lot of funding pressure for accreditation because, there's so many barriers, particularly for young Sikh women, accreditation is really important. And despite my own personal views I can see that is beneficial if it gives young people the ability to go to further education, then, of course I would support that, I just think personally that there is other barriers before you can even start to think about that. But that is a big one for us.

Far from addressing the expressed needs of the young people, she instead finds herself delivering two pre-packaged accredited programmes which she felt the young people were not fully committed to. However, as Catherine notes, the focus on accreditation is not entirely misplaced as marginalised young people undoubtedly require accreditation that will strengthen their hand in an increasingly competitive labour market. The down side is that Catherine is unable to work from the expressed need of the young women, and resultantly may not be furthering social justice objectives. Their recognitional and representational needs are entirely absent from the work Catherine is currently undertaking and this absence is compelled by the demands of funding.

Sarah also lamented the change that the positive destination focus has had on the very nature of youth work:

**Sarah:** It's all about your destinations, even schools are talking about positive destinations, their meetings have turned from being 16+ or pupil support groups to positive destinations, 16+ positive destinations, that's all everyone is obsessed about - the destination and it's not really the journey that's important anymore, whereas before it was the journey and, you know, the outcome was good at the end, whereas now it's just the end point and not the process.

Sarah discussed the contradiction this created in terms of her practice. Rather than the *process* of youth work - paying attention to conversation and relationship building and working to address the immediate needs of the young people - she felt that the positive destination agenda that was driving her work meant she had to push these aside:

**Sarah:** There's a lot of depression, social anxiety, personality disorder, from a small group of young people there's a heck of a lot of issues and you need to be dealing with that before you can force them into the world of work, it just seems, like...(long pause)...you're just going to fail them if you don't try and deal with these issues or don't try to support them as best you can before chucking them into the fire pit, in a way.

Like Catherine, Sarah is discussing the priorities of her work. Rather than addressing the underlying barriers that may be impinging on the lives of young people, she is

having to prioritise the ‘positive destination.’ Again, to make the point explicit, rather than being able to address any underlying justice issues which may be working to marginalise these young people from the labour market in the first place, funding demands a ‘quick fix.’ Resultantly, practitioners are increasingly compelled to respond to outcome measures as quickly as possible. And far from addressing injustice, Sarah is clearly concerned that she may in fact be further entrenching it by throwing the young people into the ‘fire pit.’

This point was made by Ella, who discussed the pressure she felt under to push young people into a destination – any destination – in order to fulfil the requirements of funders. Far from being able to sit and explore options with young people, of taking the necessary time to build trust, to foster relationships with young people in order to understand and discuss their immediate needs, the ‘positive destination’ agenda was compelling her to work in a way that challenged her own belief about the purpose of youth work:

**Ella:** It’s this big push when they’re only 15, 16, well what do you want to do? What do you want to do? What do you want to do? Hairdressing or construction, what do you want to do? There’s this big push to get into these unqualified, you know, type trades that you can start at a low level because it’s something that is a positive and it’s a destination as opposed to spending time with them all individually and thinking what do you actually want to do? What is your ideal job? Because it seems so far away, for them, you know?

It was clear in the interviews with Sarah and Ella that the positive destination agenda provided considerable angst in terms of the possibility that far from providing the young people with the opportunity to progress in the labour market, they were complicit in perpetuating ‘the churn’ – pressuring young people to take up opportunities at the lower end of the labour market that the young people may have difficulty progressing beyond (Shildrick et al, 2012c). Sarah and Ella are not unique in this regard, as other research has found similar happening across the UK (Smeaton et al, 2010; Simmons et al, 2014; Simmons and Smyth, 2016; Wenham, 2017). Sarah is under pressure to meet the outcomes desired by funders, whilst aware of the churn and the challenges the young people face at the lower end of the labour market:

**Sarah:** Get them doing menial jobs for not very much money. Targets, employability figures...\*laughs\*...get them looking spanking, that’s an issue,



because you're trying to say on one side to young people, this will be really good for you if you do this course, that'll give you the skills to do that and then on the other side you know that, the government are just wanting to get them on this course or get them volunteering on this, to get their figures down...we know a lot of young people that that has happened to, so it's kind of hard to go down really strong on them and push them to do things that you feel somewhere down the line they might get used or pushed to one side and then their confidence is gone and they're back to square one, I'm not sure what the answer is.

The social justice issues are clear. Sarah is potentially *contributing* towards injustice by inserting young people into exploitative training and employment.

Will made this point most explicitly as he described working with young marginalised people whilst meeting the demands of funding:

**Will:** It's quite easy to say right, we want this bit of accreditation or this wee bit of qualification that looks good. When you're dealing with people it's a lot more difficult and if you've got someone coming in with, could be drug or alcohol problems, could be relationship difficulties at home, risk of homelessness, could be, you name the issue, could be they're struggling with their sexuality, whatever it is, they've got all this going on and before you can get them into that job or into that, what is seen as the, main thing the government wants to achieve, you've got to go through all these other issues, either putting them to one side or working through them, actually, you have to do it simultaneously and that can be a really difficult thing, when you've got someone coming in with so many complex needs.

The dilemma that the attainment focused agenda is having for Will was something felt by all the practitioners in this study. Again, this is nothing new, with various authors noting that this has been a distinctive feature of youth practice for some considerable time (Williamson, 1993; Devlin, 2012; Agdur, 2017; Huse and Stenerson, 2017). Youth work practitioners have always existed in the space between policy directives and the needs of young people (Coussée et al, 2010; Walker, 2016; Seal and Andersson, 2017). However the feeling amongst the practitioners studied is that the freedom to conduct work that addresses the immediate needs of the young people has gradually lessened:

This is not to say that the practitioners were completely unable to conduct work which they felt worked in some way to address injustice. Will, for example, discussed managing the tension between the positive destination agenda in a way that allowed him to work with his participants and not impinge on his own value base, which was rooted in working in a way that would redress inequalities:

**Will:** You have to do whatever the funder wants, but you also don't want to do something that is going to be minimally, negative on your resources as well. If you pick something up like communication skills, it can be interpreted quite widely, what's the word ah was looking for, creativity is what you're looking for.

Will was able to report to his funders that the young people were developing their communication skills and re-engaging in mainstream education, therefore meeting the criteria of working towards a 'positive destination.' Will argued that 'communication' can be interpreted quite widely and felt able to carry out creative multi-media work with his young people, keeping them interested and engaged. Will describes his course as a 'starting point' for the young people, a confidence building platform from which they can move forward from. In this way, he felt able to 'square the circle' – meet the demands of funders whilst at the same time assist the young people in a way that worked towards addressing injustice. He argued that this was a first step towards them becoming less marginalised in the sphere of education and employment.

All the practitioners in the study stated that youth work is too focused on positive destinations and the concomitant requirement for their work to prioritise 'accreditation' and/or 'achievement'. Frank stated that young people were requiring more support from the health service he works for as the push for accreditation is impacting on young people's mental well-being:

**Frank:** ...we've had to shut our waiting list for counselling and it's bad. Good that we're here but really shit that people are having to put themselves under so much strain and anxiety with their mental health issues, you know? Ah think they've [Scottish Government] got the focus all wrong with young people, all they care about in schools is attainment, marks, achieving...(long pause)...but, if a child isnae well how they going to get a good mark if they've got things going through their head?

Sarah expanded on this point in her interview and expressed concern that rather than supporting young people experiencing mental health issues, she may be contributing to placing additional pressure on young people:

**Sarah:** I just think it's an awful lot of pressure to put on a young person when they're just leaving school and they've had a crap educational experience, a lot of them leaving with a few or no qualifications, em, but you know parents are on their backs, gonna get child benefit stopped or if they're not on a course then they get their tax credits stopped six months early because the kid isn't, not at college or in any form of education so there's pressures coming from all over.

The additional point here is that there is a level of compulsion involved - if young people do not achieve a positive destination they and their parents may receive less income. And given that these young people, in the main, are from households with already stretched budgets the pressure becomes even more acute. Several of the young people in this study participated on Activity Agreement programmes in order that parents would continue to receive child benefit. This throws into question whether the young people are engaging with youth services voluntarily. The practitioners may be complicit in propagating maldistribution and misrecognition, feeding young people into the churn, potentially contributing to stress and strain on young people who feel compelled to engage.

## **7.7 Administration**

A knock-on effect of the positive destination agenda that the practitioners are operating under is the amount of evidence they are compelled to provide to funding bodies. Combined with the target-driven agenda, it is here that we can make links with the 'culture of performativity' said to be impacting on all spheres of education, including youth work (Ball, 2003a; 2015; Bowl, 2017; Lewis, 2017; de St. Croix, 2018). As discussed in chapter 4 this primarily manifests in practitioners being judged on their 'numbers' – their adherence to the performance indicators expected of them in their practice with young people. However, the concomitant effect of measurement is that practitioners inevitably spend more time 'reporting on what we do rather than doing it' (Ball 2012; 19). The practitioners were unified in decrying the significant amount of time absorbed by the bureaucratic procedures associated with funding demands. Alice, for example, described how she records engagement:

**Alice:** Yeah, ah've got a lot, so ah've got, one database which is...[projects]...own internal database which is quite new and then, so from that like I said ah've got ma own case notes for every young person, but it's not that bad that you can copy and paste it from the first database and then there's a shared database as well, it's probably the easiest, I think, so far, it seems to be, but always putting dates in, about ten times for that shared database.

Again, to emphasise, this was something that all the practitioners felt took time away from providing service to the young people. Although Alice was unusual in that she had three different databases to complete, the others had similar issues:

**Ella:** ...it's the recording of...(long pause)...having to know when a young person has got on their positive destination and the moving them on bit that is time consuming, keeping them on a database and all the paperwork, the different people you have to report to, and the outcome focus, so that then takes a good half hour per person starting a new group, every week, every single young person we meet with is logged in, what they're doing as well as our own paper copies that we keep, so that is a massive thing.

What came across as more time consuming, however, were the funding reports the practitioners had to complete in order to keep funders happy, with the added pressure that failure to do so could potentially result in funding ending and them losing their job. For four of the practitioner's across three different projects, their posts were funded by three separate bodies meaning three different funding reports. Some were annual, some bi-annual and others required weekly updates on computer management information systems. What was clear was that the practitioners felt these took considerable (and valuable) time away from service provision to the young people:

**Frank:** I've got 3 annual reports to write for 3 different funders and progress reports as well, so...[funder 1]...are a bit tricky but they're OK. For...[funder 2]...it's all outcomes and it's hard to prove what you've actually been doing. I like to send photographs, if young people are on the...[outdoor project]...out in the fresh air, group photo, blah blah blah, up the hills somewhere...[funder 3]...

**Sarah:** I didn't have to do a lot of different report writing, you know, when I started, and now I have to do quarterly reports and...(long pause)...you know by the time I finish one report, you might spend a week concentrating on all the different bits and bobs to get that report written and then you're thinking about the next report so it feels like you're constantly, chasing your tail, you know? Feeding back to the funders...

Funding has become increasingly ad hoc rather than permanent with the result that practitioners find themselves spending far more time pursuing resources and then justifying their use (Jeffs and Smith, 2008; Davies and Merton, 2009; Coburn, 2011). Spence et al (2006) describe this predicament as 'managing two systems;' attempting to engage young people and adhering to the traditional values of youth work whilst 'submitting to the demands to complete the paperwork which records outcomes and indicates that they have met pre-determined targets' (p120). Professionalisation in this sense becomes a mode of disciplinary control, as these monitoring mechanisms ensure the practitioner's compliance with pre-set agenda's. The consequence of this is that rather than spending time with the young people, practitioners spend large portions of

their time responding to paperwork connected to funding, what Darking et al (2016) term 'community data burden.'

### **7.8 Partnership working**

With such a focus on partnership working in the policy it is prescient to explore the impact of this on the working life of the practitioners and the service they provide to the young people. And to assess the impact on the young people in terms of social justice. Much as other research has found, the responses suggested a mixed bag, with all practitioners confirming both positives and negatives to be drawn from the experience (Mayo and Taylor, 2001; Mason, 2015; Carroll et al, 2018). The practitioners were clear that partnerships worked when partnering agencies - and individuals - shared a similar ethos and philosophy with regards to their approach to working with young people. For Ella, a partnership with another youth work project was felt to be successful due to the individual colleague and the host project involved sharing the same value base – caring for young people:

***Ella:*** The partnership probably worked because the [project] are a good organisation that have similar values to ourselves and [worker] was a great worker that has similar values to me, singing from the same hymn sheet so to speak and quite...(long pause)...just want what's best for the young person so it works well.

Ella described through how through this partnership they were able to effectively give young people the opportunity to have a voice in anti-social behaviour legislation. Although the work was led by the requirements of the funding body, Ella felt they were able to adapt the work in a way that allowed them to respond to the interests of the young people involved. As Wood et al (2015) also note, partnership working is much more likely to be effective when partnering individuals and projects have a 'congruence of aims' and 'where individuals have good interpersonal relationships with their colleagues' (p108-119).

However, the practitioners in this study raised more challenges than benefits. It is the area of partnership with schools that is perhaps most telling, certainly in terms of the justice questions it raises. As outlined in chapter 4, the CfE has seen a rise in the role of youth workers in schools in Scotland (Davies, 2014). All of the practitioners in this study except Anna are currently engaged in partnership work with young people in

schools and all value their inclusion in the curriculum. Catherine, for example, suggested that the CfE had allowed youth workers to reach more young people:

**Catherine:** Other schools were just happy to have us in and weren't really bothered about what we were doing \*laughs\* but you know, they let the young people out of class every week, unless it was exams, but you know we were able to go in every single week and that's not always easy, for two years, it was very formal work though and that made it easy to get in...

The practitioners unanimously welcomed the *opportunity* to work in schools but discussed the issue of a 'culture clash' - the lack of fit between the informal ethos of youth work and the formality of the schools. Sarah, for example, suggested that working in the formal environment of the school came with conflict in terms of *identity* and the young people responding to her in such a way that transformed her role:

**Sarah:** ...it's just a frustrating, you end up saying, "look I'm not a teacher, don't call me Miss, I don't want to be moaning at you, like I'm like your mother, I don't want to be coming in here just, giving out and not getting anything done."

Sarah felt that this was an obstacle that was difficult to overcome and allow her to develop the relationships necessary to start undertaking 'youth work.' Coussée (2009) makes the point that youth work is suffering an 'identity crisis,' fragmenting and becoming increasingly vague due to it interfacing with 'other disciplines and practices' (p7). It is apparent from the practitioners here that partnership with schools is one such 'interface:'

**Alice:** ...when you set up a session group you have to tick what outcomes will be applicable, so, ah mean, for the, em, lifeskills one's it comes under 're-engaging in school,' em, positive social networks, they're like the soft outcomes, 'cos ah think when we do the lifeskills one's there's not really hard outcomes, I think the only thing we want to achieve with that, 'cos we contact them three months later to see if they're still at school.

This reflection was common across the practitioners working in schools - their main task is to ensure the young people remain in education or assist in the process of supporting them to achieve a positive destination upon leaving school. The problem in terms of justice is that the practitioners are offering little more than an *affirmative* remedy - working with the 'hardest-to-reach' young people in order to enable them to remain in school. As Wyn and White (1998) argue:

...intervention generally refers to a process whereby a minority are subjected to particular processes which bring them back within the 'normal' range...thereby supporting the very institutional processes which marginalize young people, i.e. to make young people fit into the school, rather than changing aspects of the school itself. (p30)

Again, the charge here is that the practitioners may actually be contributing to injustice by working in schools with those young people identified as disruptive in order to enable them to become less so, or assist them to some form of low-level qualification as was the case for the practitioners in this study:

**Will:** ...at the moment ah'm based in the schools, young folks coming in with disruptive behaviour, or attitudes that suggest that 'ah'm no wanting to get involved in this, ah'm no liking school, ah hate ma teacher', or, stuff that kind of masks the fact that they're lacking the confidence and self-esteem to be part of it and often their behaviours will be, ways of, ah suppose masking how they're really feeling.

An argument can be made along justice lines that the alternative – young people disengaging entirely from school and achieving no qualifications at all - would be far worse than the affirmative work that practitioners such as Will and the others in this study are undertaking. Such work can prevent vulnerable young people from complete disengagement (Deuchar and Ellis, 2013). But in terms of a perspective of social justice such work falls far from an approach that could be termed as transformative in Fraser's terms. Instead they are undertaking work that is about aiding the young people to fit into a system and culture that is ill-equipped to deal with young people who feel alienated in the school environment (Roberts, 2012; Tarabini et al, 2017). Rather than combating this injustice, the practitioners can be argued to be contributing to a form of misrecognition. As Ingram (2009) discusses in her study of working-class boys within the school environment they are:

...subjected to a...lack of recognition of their cultural background, and can come under pressure to conform to middle-class attitudes and dispositions through discourse on 'appropriate' language, behaviour and taste. (p432)

For the majority of the young people in this study a similar argument can be made. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the young people describe a largely negative relationship with the formal school environment. The practitioner interviews suggest their role is to work with the most disengaged young people in order to re-engage them or assist them to achieve low-level qualifications so they do not leave school with no

qualifications at all. Far from working towards recognition of the multiple barriers these young people face, these youth workers may be reinforcing unequal power relations and, unwittingly, sustaining the symbolic violence these young people endure in the school environment (Cooper, 2012; Stahl, 2017; Simmons and Smyth, 2018).

It can be argued, in this conception, practitioners are another level of social control - their role within the school a form of remedial intervention (McGregor, 2015). Youth work in this context, Pareja (2017) argues, is acting 'as an instrument of prevention with a long-term vision...as a remedial instrument in the face of situations of anomie, conflict or social maladjustment' (p145). For any practice that has ambitions to combat injustice, practitioners should perhaps think twice about engaging with the formal school curriculum, unless they have the freedom to define their own work and the ability to ensure their identity as youth worker is distinctive (Buchroth, 2010; Schild et al, 2017). Davies (2011) makes the point that practitioners have to work to ensure that collaborative relationships operate in favour of young people, 'not least- to fulfil one of youth work's core commitments - to help tip some balances of power in their favour' (p41). The indications from this research suggest that this is increasingly challenging to achieve, because (1) of the combination of tightly regulated targets these practitioners have to work towards as part of their partnership work in the school and (2) the practitioners' lack of power in the school environment to define the aims of their own practice.

## **7.9 Discussion and conclusion**

There is a contradiction at the heart of the work these practitioners are undertaking with the young people they engage with. The *Statement on the nature and purpose of youth work* (YouthLink Scotland, 2005) advocates three features that are said to define the practice as outlined in chapter 4:

- 1) That young people choose to participate
- 2) The work must build from where people are
- 3) Youth work recognises the young person and the youth worker as partners in a learning process

What the data presented in this chapter has revealed, is that the ability of the practitioners to adhere to these features is challenging, to say the least. For the



practitioners whether or not the young people are participating entirely of their own volition is questionable. For many of the young people, participation is driven by a variety of needs: boredom, financial necessity or a lack of alternative options. For Sarah and Ella this issue is particularly acute, as they have become the arbiters of whether or not the young participants on their AA programme receive their EMA. As highlighted above, this altered the relationship building aspect of the practice to the point where Ella feels that what she is doing is no longer 'youth work.'

It is clear from the interviews that the work these practitioners are involved in is not 'starting where young people are at.' The message from the practitioners is clear: the work they are doing is being led by the outcomes determined by funders. Of course, it should be highlighted that the focus on employability is not entirely misguided. This is, after all, the number one priority highlighted by the young people in chapter 6. However, the evidence presented here suggests that the practice is working to an *affirmative* agenda of low-level qualifications and aiding young people to insert themselves into the churn. The argument is that the youth workers become complicit in cementing social injustice rather than combating it. Of course, it can be argued that they are at least ameliorating the worst excesses of poverty by enabling the young people to participate in the labour market to some degree. But without offering young people the opportunity to at least begin working towards a more transformative agenda, the charge from Fraser's (1995b) work is that by working to an affirmative agenda they are in effect supporting and shaping injustice, leaving intact the deep structures that perpetuate disadvantage. Thus the wheel of injustice will continue and young people from similar backgrounds will continue to require such 'support.' Any claim that the practice is rooted in a genuine partnership between practitioner and young person is open to scrutiny. That is not to say that the practitioners here do not develop relationships with the young people in order to work in the most effective way they can. But, it is clear that this is challenging as they attempt to do so whilst struggling under the weight of reduced resources, the tightening of funding conditions and the associated challenges of working in schools.

As a result of the practitioner's inability to 'start where the young people are,' what is missing is any focus on the misrecognition or misrepresentational issues facing the young people. The practitioners in this chapter are compelled to attend to the

maldistributive domain alone and support the young people to improve their economic situation. In terms of misrecognition it is apparent that the practitioners have very little ability to intercede in combating the multiple injustices the young people in this cohort suffer. On the contrary, as Slovenko and Thompson (2016) note, the target-driven culture that they must adhere to 'only enhances a culture of stigma against particular groups of young people' (p22). Without giving young people the tools to challenge their misrecognition, practitioners could be entrenching it adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of maldistribution (Fraser, 2005b).

However, the point here is that by using Fraser's framework the practitioners are being held to an impossible standard. A more pertinent question is this; is social justice possible in the current context? Fraser (2016a) herself is pessimistic as she states 'we have more inequality, we are losing rights that we had before...so it's a dark time, no question about that. In theory it is possible, there's no reason why we can't fix things. Will we do it? Remains to be seen' (p12). Participatory parity as a standard is only achievable in a context of equality (at least a rough equality that does not generate relations of dominance or subordination (Fraser, 1997a)). Fraser (1996) herself writes that the approach of participatory parity is utopian, but 'one might apply the lessons learned from considering it to devise transitional reforms that can point to transformative ends' (p65). The usefulness of the framework for practitioners is locating injustice (this is its primary purpose in any case) and then chipping away at, for example, those issues highlighted and discussed by the young people in chapter 6.

The ability to chip away at injustice, however, is extremely limited. Forty years ago the LEWRG (1979) wrote that practitioners employed by government in community settings could utilise their position 'in' the state to conduct a subversive practice in order to enable local people to challenge structural problems, of which state apparatus played a key role:

Deprivation and poverty were seen to be structurally created and sustained. They were neither an unintended outcome of policy nor a function of social pathology or institutional deficiency, but rather a direct consequence of the operations of international capital and the state's role in securing its interests. Furthermore, far from redistributing power, the 'community solution' was part of the hegemonic apparatus of the state aimed at organizing consent and managing dissent. (Shaw and Martin, 2000: 404)

The LEWRG (1979) discussed the limits of power available to practitioners 'in' the state to resist the reproduction of capitalist social relations. They noted at the time that their ability to do so was limited by a lack of resources:

We are often given impossible problems to solve arising from poverty or from the powerlessness of our 'clients'. The resources available to back up our intervention – the welfare provision of the state – are a drop in the ocean of need. (p9)

Perhaps the primary point to take from this chapter is that the ability of the practitioners in this study to resist the processes of neo-liberalism, which are driving poverty, inequality and the processes of individualisation and depoliticisation is even more limited given they are not even of the state, but rather operating *beyond* the state. Processes of neoliberal governance increasingly ensures that the government and other funding bodies contract out work that would traditionally have been undertaken by the state itself. Third sector organisations now undertake much of this work (as with all but one of the practitioners in this study) (Lindsay et al, 2014). With this funding, however, comes the 'ideology of performocracy' as technologies of measurement and accountability are imposed at arm's length by funders (Brown, 2013; Stahl and Baars, 2016; Maslen, 2018). Fougner (2008) notes that these processes enable government, for example, to shape, guide and regulate practitioner behaviour to achieve the objectives they consider desirable and this sees these practitioners bent towards an economic agenda largely designed to ensure young people are more employable. This drives the performative aspects of the practitioner's roles, and these managerialist processes confine their ability to develop even a more humanistic individualised practice, never mind a more radical agenda which could allow the young people an opportunity to begin the process of naming and challenging the multiple injustices that they face. Rather, as Lindsay et al (2014) found, the governance mechanisms move service delivery 'towards more standardized forms of contracting, characterized by stringent regulation of the content and outcomes of provision...this approach reduced...flexibility and limited their distinctive contribution' (p201). If the LEWRG found it challenging to address the issues that the clients they engaged with faced, it is arguably even more challenging now given this shift towards a more complex system of governance.

This is a challenging development for these practitioners. Youth work is committed in principle to the empowerment of young people, increasing their agency and enabling

them to have a greater voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Davies, 2015; Siurala, 2017). And this is perhaps the most glaring absence from the interviews. The practitioners in this study are not engaged in any form of youth work practice that would address the issues of misrepresentation raised in the previous chapter. Only Ella was able to offer one example of practice that extended young people's voice. Given that the *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-2019* (Scottish Government, 2014a) makes the point that youth work has the potential to aid young people to exercise genuine power, it is a not inconsequential omission from the practitioners in this study. And given the significant issues of maldistribution and misrecognition that these young people suffer, the absence of any support to enable them to challenge these injustices is noteworthy.

Sercombe (2010) argues that working towards greater:

...social justice is an ethical requirement. Empowerment is an ethical project. Inclusion is ethically driven. Poverty, homelessness, violence, destructive drugs, dispossession...these aren't technical problems, awaiting the skill and resource to fix them. They are deeply moral issues. To use that most unfashionable of words, their continued existence, and the structures that maintain them, are *wrong*. (p3 – *emphasis in original*)

As such, for practitioners not foregrounding these issues, the charge is a serious one – that they are not practicing ethical youth work. The practitioners in this study are quite aware of the tension between their commitment to the welfare of the young people and the work they are charged with undertaking. It should be noted that the practitioners are focused more on supporting individuals rather than challenging structures that create inequality and/or powerlessness. But they are undoubtedly committed to improving the lives of the young people they engage with. However, they are encountering a performative landscape that is limiting their opportunity to respond to the immediate needs of the young people they are working with. All but one discussed the negative impact of targets and outcomes on their ability to develop a practice 'starting where young people are at.' Rather, they are resigned to the reality that they are now a feature of the work that has to be endured. Returning to Sennett (1998), he makes the point that decentralised forms of governance convey the illusion that individuals have more freedom to drive their own practice. The reality is that the imposition of performative practices such as targets and outcomes mean that for funding bodies, such as the government:

...it is more in the position of doing the accounting on its own demands, rather than designing a system by which the demands can be carried out. 'Concentration without centralization' is a way of conveying the operation of command in structure which no longer has the clarity of a pyramid – the institutional structure has become more convoluted, not simpler. This is why the very word 'debureaucratization' is misleading as well as ungainly. In modern organizations which practice concentration without centralization, domination from the top is both strong and shapeless. (p56-57)

The result is that the power of practitioners to bend practice to the needs of the young people they encounter is extremely limited. And this precedes an inability to work on the issues highlighted by the young people in the previous chapter.

## **Chapter 8 – Summary and Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This study has critically examined the experiences of a group of young people navigating their way to adulthood under the weight of multiple injustices. It has also analysed the contradictions that practitioners working with these young people are encountering in their practice.

The original contribution to knowledge I have presented in this thesis is the systematic application of a theory of justice that reveals the ways in which the injustices impacting on the young people are working in unison to cement their marginalisation. Through utilising Nancy Fraser's framework of social justice I have also been able to show the current context that practitioners are working in is limiting their ability to respond to these injustices.

The narrative approach used to interview the young people has allowed rich insight into their experiences. The data collected and presented has generated original empirical evidence rooted in the reflective experiences of the research participants. These findings have the potential to stimulate wider discussion and reflection on the injustices that young marginalised people must negotiate. As this thesis has shown, the hegemonic discourse of individualism and meritocracy can result in these injustices being overlooked. It is imperative that due recognition is given to the multiple barriers that marginalised young people such as those in this study must negotiate as they journey towards adulthood.

The interviews with the practitioners reveal a disturbing picture – a contradictory policy landscape which foregrounds three key features that are argued to define youth work. However, the ability of the practitioners to foreground these features is made nigh on impossible by an ever-tightening performative agenda. The upshot of this is that the practitioners are unable to address the multiple injustices impacting on the lives of the young people.

## 8.2 Answering the research questions

### 8.2.1 What are the experiences of this group of young people in their journey from school to adult independence?

This group of young people are experiencing multiple challenges as they struggle to make the transition towards adult independence. It is clear from the interview material that their overriding priority is to attain stable and secure employment. Unfortunately, this priority is proving extremely challenging to achieve. As Silva (2012) so acutely notes of working-class youth, they are caught between the promises of the past and the uncertainty of the present:

They are haunted by the meanings and rituals of traditional adulthood even though they see this model as unattainable, inadequate, or simply undesirable...the vast majority of respondents found themselves “lost in transition” due to the mismatch between enduring cultural models of adulthood, on the one hand, and evolving opportunity structures on the other. (p518)

These young people may be reaching for the unobtainable, a chimera that exists only in times past. The myth of the full-time, stable job hangs over their present, dangling the dream of security – a mirage in a desert of opportunity. For some, their poor school experience has translated into a poor work experience and they find themselves relegated to the secondary labour market, surplus to requirement and subject to expropriation. Instead of finding genuine opportunities to develop the kinds of skills that could offer them a toe-hold in the labour market, this study provides further evidence for the ‘churn’ (MacDonald et al, 2005; Shildrick et al, 2012c; Simmons et al, 2014; Hardgrove et al, 2015). This is not the footloose time of *emerging adulthood* described by Arnett (2006), but rather evidence of a frustrated, bounded agency, where structural constraints are hindering these young people from transition to the stable and secure employment they so desperately seek (Evans, 2002; Schoon and Lyons-Amos, 2016). Volunteering, employability programmes, work placements, low-level college courses and short-term, poorly paid work are poor substitutes. From the evidence presented here, it is apparent that these opportunities are not meeting the requirements of the young people in terms of immediate fulfilment, nor providing the opportunity to develop skills for future progression in a hostile labour market. Instead they appear to leave the young people ripe for expropriation. Finding their labour is

given in exchange for, in most cases, either JSA or EMA with 'employers' contributing nothing in most instances.

This exposure to expropriation is rooted in their history of deprivation. For all but two of the cohort, their childhood has been scarred by experiences of deprivation and for many, watching parents (mothers, primarily) struggle with the impact of this. The evidence here supports the findings of Pantazis (2016) that parents who live in hardship will do their utmost to play a protective role by sacrificing their own needs in order that children and young people do not go without life's essentials. Despite this, however, the link between deprivation and educational outcomes is well documented in Scotland (Mowat, 2017). For the young people studied, it is clear that these early experiences of hardship have influenced their time at school and ability (and inclination) to commit to education. Lacking the credentials necessary to engage effectively in an ever competitive labour market, their relative disadvantage precedes their entry into the churn (Shildrick et al, 2012c; Bills, 2016).

Their relegation to the churn compounds and further contributes to their present also being scarred by deprivation. As Fahmy (2018) notes, since the global recession of 2008, 'young adults are substantially more likely to experience deprivation of necessities, economic strain (including subjective poverty), and wider exclusion from economic resources, norms of participation, and living conditions' (p59). Their economic marginalisation as well as the impact of welfare reform which disproportionately impacts on young people combine to leave young people in a precarious position in relation to deprivation (Hoolachan et al, 2017; Wilkinson, 2017). The findings of this study support this. And this is not just felt in terms of their material well-being but also their exposure to popular stereotypes of those in poverty and on the fringes of the labour market.

The young people interviewed in this study were well aware of such stereotypes and were also acutely aware that they were at risk of being on the receiving end of these pejorative labels. As other research has found, the stigma associated with welfare receipt can deter individuals from accessing much needed finances, taking their place amongst the 'missing workless' (Shildrick et al, 2012d). Several of the young people in this study have been relegated to this group. There is perhaps no greater manifestation



of the impact of stigma than young people, in families already struggling to get by, refusing to accept money of which they are entitled to receive. Others resisted the labelling that comes with their position on the labour market periphery. The young people continue to endeavour to find meaningful opportunities and this is testament to their resilience. Far from lacking motivation, they are displaying remarkable agency in their efforts to combat their labour market marginalisation. However, it is clear that the sample in this study have very little choice available to them in their post-school journey (Pless, 2013; Côté, 2016). The only choice they have is to participate in poor work or training - or opt out. Despite their travails, these young people continue to harbour conventional aspirations for their future; a car, for some a family, a home and the stable, secure and long-term job that would underpin all this (Finlay et al, 2010; Shildrick et al, 2012e). However, what is apparent is that present uncertainty is limiting the ability of these young people to plan too far ahead and as a consequence many seek refuge in the present (Leccardi, 2008; Devenney, 2017). Others, however, are beginning to opt out, as Schoon and Lyons-Amos (2016) also found:

Uncertainty regarding employment opportunities makes it more difficult to plan ahead, at the same time these longer-term changes may render agentic orientations even more critical. In particular young people who disengage and withdraw from efforts to enhance their skills and capabilities either through education and training or through paid work, may flounder in an ever more competitive labour market. (p13)

With the processes associated with individualisation, and as the 'entrepreneurial self' becomes the *modus vivendi* it is, more than ever, up to young people to become the 'active engineers of the self,' able to navigate their way through an increasingly competitive (and hostile) labour market (Pascual and Martín, 2017; Mørch et al, 2018). However, it is well documented that the ability to navigate the choppy waters of the current labour market is heavily dependent on individual access to resources (economic, cultural and social) and opportunity structures (Smyth et al, 2013; Roberts, 2016; Riddell and Weedon, 2017; Stahl, 2018). For the young people in the study, their lack of qualifications and the dearth of meaningful employment opportunities in the local area combine to cement their relative disadvantage.

It is unsurprising that the majority of the young people in the study, despite feeling ambivalent about the community, see it as a site of familiarity and *belonging*. The sense

of security they derive from this is in contrast to the precarity that punctuates other areas of their lives (Stahl and Habib, 2017). The findings here support those of Stahl and Baars (2016) who note, 'the neoliberal imperative to be socially mobile...and 'aspirational' appears at odds with the way in which young people's aspirations are informed by their attachment to place' (p321). These young people were almost unanimous in their reluctance to look too far abroad in their search for employment. Whilst they displayed remarkable agency in searching for employment, it is a situated agency, and this informs the types of opportunities that they feel able and willing to take up. Again, this emphasises the importance of local opportunity structures in the lives of young people such as those in this study (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Evans, 2016).

It is also apparent that 'place' is playing a part in terms of the gendered and classed post-school paths that the young people are following. The young people are being directed down these by parents, school and post-school employability programmes. For the young women in the cohort studied, hair and beauty salons or childcare courses and placements provide the primary post-school pathway. For the young men, the appeal is toward traditional masculine industry jobs; mechanics, building, joinery and other trade occupations. It appears that in terms of occupational aspirations, class and gender still occupy a central role, albeit these are also shaped by local opportunity structures. Combined with the young people's attachment to the locale, it is apparent that these gendered aspirations are, at least in part, working in tandem with what is available to them in their area (Kintrea et al, 2015).

There is also support for the individualisation thesis here, as the influence of factors such as gender, class, disability and inequality appear to be fading from the young people's purview (Thompson, 2011; Farthing, 2016; Roberts, 2016; Threadgold, 2017). There is certainly evidence amongst the cohort to support Furlong and Cartmel's (2007) concept of an *epistemological fallacy* clouding the view of the young people. As other studies have found, the young people here largely adhere to the meritocratic myth that motivation and hard-work are the only ingredients required to get on (Allen, 2015; Laughland-Booÿ et al, 2015; Franceschelli and Keating, 2018). The operation of structural impediments appears in the narratives implicitly, suggesting that the young people are not entirely blind to their existence – but they are not in the foreground of their imaginary (Reay et al, 2009; France and Haddon, 2014). Thus, there is a real

danger of the young people blaming themselves for any failure to get on in the future. Certainly, it could be argued that this may be a contributing factor to the young people feeling *discouraged*, losing hope as efforts to find meaningful employment flounder (Raffass, 2016).

What is missing is due recognition of the decades of deindustrialisation and the more recent recession and consequent post-crisis austerity, all of which have had significant repercussions for young people who leave school with few qualifications (Shildrick et al, 2012d; McDowell, 2017). All these factors have had particular ramifications for young people in terms of the availability of lower quality and durable work which would offer pathways into decent and more stable employment. As Thompson (2011) argues and is agreed with here:

...particularly for those who are least well-qualified and live in the most deprived areas, 'inclusion' through education or training is likely to mean allocation to courses and training schemes which confer little benefit, either in terms of labour market advantage or educational progression. (p799)

As Ruddy (2018) notes, rather than the issue being one of individual motivation the evidence points to the collapse of opportunity structures for young people, a national structural problem that is impacting on young people who leave school with limited qualifications. He goes on to argue that:

These system-wide failures, combined with the types of unhelpful victimisation that stigmatises and shames individuals, and squashes the self-esteem of an entire social group, can reduce a whole generation of good young people to nothing. (p266)

This is compounded by individualising policy discourse of 'choice' and 'aspiration' which also works to veil the structural impediments these young people must negotiate in their relentless search for employment (Wright, 2016). Rather than acknowledging the significant inequalities in economic, social and cultural capital available to young people along lines of class, gender and race (amongst others), these discourses contribute to the myth of meritocracy and help to cement the epistemological fallacy that airbrushes out restricted opportunity structures (Stahl, 2017; Ule and Leskošek, 2018). As this thesis has revealed, the ability to shoulder this burden and determine the desired life course is significantly hindered with limited resources. Recognition of this is well overdue.

Of course, not all young people face the same impediments. Maya, for example, grew up in a family with considerable financial resources. But she and Divya experience cultural barriers to their future aspirations that none of the other young people encounter. By virtue of their gender and ethno-religious identity the two young Sikh women in the cohort feel compelled to comply, to some degree, with the cultural expectations of their particular sect (Bhopal, 2016). This is severely curtailing their ability to pursue their hopes for the future, as well as the expression of their individual identity in the present. The effects of gender are also apparent in the narratives of the young mum's in the cohort. Their experiences are particularly scarred by deprivation as they struggle with debt, isolation and a lack of finance with which to purchase the basic necessities of life. Theirs were the most challenging stories to hear. Not only are they struggling with the effects of deprivation but they also keenly feel the negative labelling that is associated with their status as young mothers (Kehily, 2018). This is not only impacting on their identity and sense of self but is curbing their willingness to participate in the norms of social life. Although most of the young people in the cohort share very similar experiences by virtue of their common social class, it is apparent there are particular manifestations of gender and ethnicity which punctuate the young people's experiences of growing up in Porttown.

What unites them is a sense of cynicism about the formal political sphere. Amongst the young people there is a deep lack of trust in politicians and a feeling of powerlessness in their ability to have their voice heard in the political domain. For the young people there is a distinct lack of external efficacy, a sense of disconnection and alienation, as they feel that politicians have little awareness of what life is like for them growing up in an area such as Porttown. However, it would be remiss to equate this cynicism and disconnection with a lack of knowledge about politics. The young people all displayed knowledge of issues and personalities associated with current political issues. However, this is not translating into participation in the formal political sphere. Only the recent EU and Scottish referendums appealed to several of the young people, primarily due to them feeling that their vote mattered and that there was widespread information available regarding the issues relating to each, leading to an increase in political efficacy.

This is important, as the evidence presented here suggests that their lack of internal efficacy is a significant impediment to their participating in the formal political domain.

Many of the young people in the cohort suggest that they do not want to participate as they feel that they do not have the necessary information in order to do so. Many make the point that school did not equip them with the skills necessary to participate. As Norris (2009) notes, participation in politics is greatest among those who feel informed and efficacious, so it is perhaps little surprise that the cohort here are not participating. Several of the young people spoke of how information relating to the two referendums was difficult to avoid, suggesting that if they felt a sense of internal efficacy combined with a stronger sense of external efficacy then they would be more inclined to engage in the formal political domain. This is important as it is in the political domain that the catalogue of injustices described could begin to be challenged.

### **8.2.2 What social justice issues exist for these young people?**

The findings of my study reveals a troubling array of injustices impacting on the lives of the young people. It is important to re-state that these are not felt uniformly - young people are not a homogenous group. And this is critical to consider when assessing the injustices that particular young people suffer as they attempt to navigate a path to adult independence. Fraser's framework allows us to identify the imbrication of the three spheres of injustice – how they work to reinforce one another, feed into one another and ultimately leave them marginalised and seemingly powerless to do anything about this state of affairs.

In terms of redistribution, it is apparent that the young people here are subjects of ongoing *expropriation*, existing 'outside the wage nexus' (Fraser, 2016b: 166). Relegated to employability programmes, work placements, training schemes and a variety of low-pay and/or zero hour contract positions, they find themselves compelled to labour for very little remuneration, if any. Allied to this, the evidence presented here confirms that they are gaining little in the way of skills from which to escape this predicament. This is cementing their place in the churn and leaving them *economically marginalised*. The danger here is that this is going to scar their future prospects leaving them ripe for expropriation well into their future. The *deprivation* that the majority of the young people experienced growing up, and continue to endure, has limited their ability to fully commit and enjoy the fruits of education. In a society that is, in principle, committed to extending genuine equality of opportunity, such a situation constitutes a grave

redistributive injustice (Scottish Government, 2014b; House of Lords, 2016; Alexiadou, 2017).

From the evidence presented in this thesis the young people's political disconnection and alienation from the political sphere is rooted in their economic marginalisation. Excluded from the economic sphere, these young people have little stake in society (Edmiston, 2016; Briggs, 2017). This is compounded by a lack of efficacy and the feeling that politicians are disinterested in them and disconnected from their everyday lives. Moving beyond the formal political sphere, for several of the young people their marginalisation from the economic sphere precedes their exclusion from participating in the norms of social life. As Fraser (2007) notes, sharing in these norms is fundamental to well-being and is undoubtedly a matter of social justice. Participatory parity in terms of the domain of representation extends beyond the purely political to account for participation in social interaction more generally (Fraser, 2011). The evidence presented in this study suggests that the three spheres are combining to cement the young people's marginalisation. Exclusion from the economic sphere is exacerbated by a stigmatising discourse targeted at those in the labour market periphery that works to impede young people's participatory parity in the sphere of representation. Fraser (2010) asks:

Do the polity's decision rules accord equal voice in public deliberations and fair representation in public decision-making to all of its members? Are all who are counted as members able to participate on a par with all others? When the answer is no, we are confronted with what I call 'ordinary-political injustices.' (p285)

It is clear that by virtue of their maldistribution and misrecognition, these young people's parity of participation in the representational domain is impeded, and as such can be considered an *ordinary-political injustice*.

It is this that is the clearest manifestation of the imbrication of the three spheres. As Fraser (2012b) notes:

Look at how the lack of political representation reinforces and exacerbates real social inequality insofar as people are unable to articulate interests in a way that gets heard. So I think of these as vicious circles among all three planes. (p17)

Devoid of political voice, rooted in a lack of internal and external efficacy, these young people have no way to contest the injustice impacting on their lives. To frame their political marginalisation as of their own making, either in terms of apathy or selfishness, is another example of misrecognition. Rather, these young people feel disconnected and alienated from the formal political sphere. The evidence presented here switches the focus on young people's lack of participation from being an issue with the *supply* side, to the *demand* side. Fraser's status model again allows us to recognise the institutionalised and systemic issues at the heart of these young people's political disengagement. It is essential that these issues are understood. Fraser's status model allows us to locate their political exclusion in their maldistribution and misrecognition. Fraser (2013; 2014c) also makes the point that modern capitalism poses a significant barrier to collective voice, as the process of individualisation and the hollowing out of public power at every scale sees the breakup of a traditional working-class identity. Young people such as those in the study take their place in an ever expanding precariat which lacks a unified voice and as such, any semblance of political heft. Fraser (2014b) argues this poses a significant issue not only in terms of combating inequality but also of representational justice:

If the interlocutors do not constitute a demos, how can their collective opinion be translated into binding laws and administrative policies? If, moreover, they are not fellow citizens, putatively equal in participation rights, status, and voice, then how can the opinion they generate be considered legitimate? (p22)

Resolving this issue appears critical for the young people studied, if they are to begin to challenge the multiple injustices impacting on their lives. However, it appears challenging, to say the least, to envisage a scenario where these young people will feel suitably empowered to speak back to these injustices.

As other research notes, the lack of participation has seen social policy turn against young people evidenced in terms of welfare reform in recent years (Worrall, 2015; Crisp and Powell, 2017; Fahmy, 2018). Of course, the young people who suffer the consequences of this most profoundly are those represented in this study. All three of Fraser's domains intersect here as their maldistribution is cemented by their misrepresentation and compounded by the misrecognition of young people on the fringes of the labour market as 'undeserving' (McDowell, 2017). The stereotypical

cultural representations of young unemployed people manifest in a variety of ways which work to impede these young people's parity of participation. The clearest example of this is the popular representation of young people on the labour market periphery which disparages their supposed lack of agency, portraying them as figures worthy of derision (Blackman and Rogers, 2018). Such discourse contributes to further alienation and exacerbates their economic marginalisation and political exclusion. This *disrespect* works to airbrush out the multiple structural barriers young people must negotiate in their struggle to find the stable and secure employment that they all seek. Far from acknowledging the significant efforts these young people are making to secure meaningful employment, they find themselves labelled in pejorative terms. And this is where Fraser's status model is particularly potent, as it helps to throw light on the systemic, structural root of the young people's misrecognition, as 'it becomes clear that what previously looked like the personal problems of isolated individuals are actually injustices rooted in structural features of society' (Fraser et al, 2004: 378).

As well as disrespect, a significant component of the misrecognition these young people experience is rooted in Fraser's sub-division of *cultural domination*. As Jaeggi notes in conversation with Fraser (Fraser and Jaeggi, 2018), the working-class' lifestyle and form of life and culture is neglected and disparaged; 'the working class, the abandoned poor, and the 'non-bohemian' segments of the precariat are not only economically deprived; they are also culturally deprived' (p210). Rather than acknowledging the aspirations of young marginalised people which fall outside of the institutionally valorised destination of higher education, these are instead constructed as deficit:

Educational aspirations in common with other areas of neo-liberal policy development, are not neutral but in reality reflect middle-class practices and are facilitated through middle-class cultural capital...this focus on transforming the capacities of individual children and their families living in low-income neighbourhoods, rather than emphasising societal change, can impact positively on the life chances of some individuals. However...the door to social mobility is theoretically held open for appropriately aspirational citizen-workers, while the classed-based nature of these idealised neo-liberal child and parenting subjectivities, and the middle-class dispositions and resources on which they rest, remain obscured (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011: 92).

In short, it is argued that social policy in the UK equates 'high' aspiration with the goal of participation in higher education (Grant, 2017). The Scottish Government (2018b) has



itself acknowledged that 'we need to move away from an inappropriate view that there is a single route to success in life with everything else being a poor consolation' (p4). However, as Ainley (2018) notes, repeated attempts have been made to rebuild the vocational route to put it on a par with higher education since the 1970s - and failed to do so. It remains to be seen what can be done to interrupt a rhetoric of aspiration which positions higher education as the only game in town and contributes to the misrecognition of those who do not aspire to go to university (Stahl, 2018). This misrecognition is furthered by the discourse of choice and a focus on career guidance which individualises the transition from school to work and seeks to responsibilise the young people. A situation that fails to acknowledge the considerable evidence that choices and post-school options are heavily circumscribed by structural factors (Roberts, 2009; Bowers-Brown, 2015; Schoon and Lyons-Amos, 2016; Spratt, 2016). One component of this, as highlighted in this study, is the young people's connection to place. These young people's attachment to family and locality appears as a source of security in a sea of uncertainty. But such loyalty is antithetical to a neoliberal discourse which foregrounds and prioritises the development of a weightless subjectivity in order to remain flexible and respond to the demands of the labour market (Spohrer, 2011; Allen and Hollingworth, 2013; Maslen, 2018). Again, Fraser's status model allows us to recognise this as a matter of justice and an example of institutionally supported misrecognition.

The young people's misrecognition is further cemented by a lack of understanding regarding their immediate material needs and wants. For many of the young people in this study their expressed priority was to earn money and alleviate the deprivation that they and their families were experiencing. Due recognition needs to be paid to the financial difficulties that young people like those in the study experience and how this can influence post-school decision-making. This is particularly the case for the young mothers in the study who although harbouring conventional aspirations for themselves and their children, they were particularly prey to economic hardship. Rather than finding the compassion and understanding that their situation merits, young mothers continue to endure stereotypical disparagement in policy and popular discourse (Fraser, 1996; Kehily, 2018; Sniekers and van den Brink, 2019). And as Maya and Divya's experience reveals, an intersectional lens and due recognition of cultural

difference is essential to take into account the post-school experiences of young people. As they described in their interviews the combination of gender and religious identity is combining to erode their participatory parity – and this across all three domains. The misrecognition they endure is contributing to their maldistribution in terms of their post-school opportunities. And these undoubtedly limit their ability to have a political voice.

For all the young people in the study, their lack of participation in the political sphere means that their ability to challenge their maldistribution and misrecognition is severely compromised. As Fraser (2016a) notes, it is not enough for groups to limit themselves to the informal sphere of politics:

You don't have democracy without a coercive power. It has to be a public power, a democratically accountable, popularly organized and elected power. It can be to some degree decentralized for some questions, but there is no substitute for this. You're fooling yourself if you think you can get rid of injustice without a coercive power and certainly not in a situation like the present. (p9)

Challenging injustice requires participation in formal politics. However, if young people continue to be excluded from the economic sphere and misrecognised as apathetic, lacking aspiration or labelled as scroungers and held responsible for their own economic marginalisation then it remains to be seen how they can be encouraged to engage in a politics which they rightly view as hostile. Research consistently finds that non-participation in formal politics is most pronounced amongst young people without qualifications and working-class youth and this is supported by the findings here (Bastedo, 2015; Heath, 2016; Sloam and Henn, 2019). The consequence of their maldistribution and misrecognition means that these young people do not participate informally in politics. If informal participation in politics is largely ineffectual in terms of enacting significant change, what then for non-participation? As Fraser (2014b) notes, a properly functioning public sphere is a matter of justice and a legitimate democracy requires the equal participation of all citizens. The evidence presented here suggests that this is some way off, if the experiences of the young people studied are indicative of marginalised young people elsewhere.

### **8.2.3 What is the impact of the relationship between policy and practice for practitioners working with young people?**

These young people's non-participation in the political sphere should be troubling for anyone with an interest in social justice and a healthy, burgeoning democracy. But perhaps it should be more so for practitioners. As Bright (2015) suggests, 'a healthy and ethical society must provide spaces for young people to grow, develop independence and 'come to voice' (p248). Youth work has traditionally advanced itself as one such space (Spence, 2004; Corney, 2006; Jeffs and Smith, 2010). However, the evidence presented in this study shows that these practitioners are unable to work with the young people in a way that would allow them to come together and challenge the multiple injustices they are enduring in the political domain – formal or otherwise.

This is crucial for our understanding of how the profession is currently operating. As has been repeatedly stated throughout this thesis, interceding in issues of injustice is fundamentally an ethical requirement of youth work practice. And this is particularly crucial for practitioners working with the most marginalised of young people, as with those in this study. As Sercombe (2010) so potently observes:

If youth is created as a population group by its exclusion from the common wealth, and if youth work is about addressing that exclusion and mitigating its damage, then there is a moral claim for justice which motivates our profession. (p28)

Unfortunately from the evidence presented in chapter 7, the practitioners are unable to develop a practice which would enable them to address the multiple injustices in the lives of the young people. The frustration expressed in the interviews by the practitioners regarding this situation was palpable. The paradox at the heart of this is that policy in Scotland defines three features that should typify practice – and if the practitioners were able to adhere to these then they would be in a much stronger position to 'start where the young people are at.' However, the policy landscape, informed by an ever tightening performative agenda, sees the practitioners charged with delivering pre-ordained targets and outcomes that gives them little room for manoeuvre. The demands of funding are tightening and their ability to work in a way that prioritises the expressed needs of young people is limited. The more that funding demands narrow economic outcomes and limits the ability of practitioners to start

where young people are at, the more the practice moves away from one rooted in the lives of the young people.

#### **8.2.4 How does participatory parity as a goal for social justice help us understand this context?**

The primary function of Fraser's framework is that it allows a window into what are the major issues of injustice in the lives of the young people. The important secondary function is as a lens through which to examine the landscape that these practitioners are operating within – asking if they are able to respond to these injustices. From the evidence presented in this thesis the answer is a resounding 'no.'

Fraser's framework allows us to see which 'spheres of justice' the practitioners work is targeted at. And we can see, that in the main, policy is directing the sector towards the redistributive sphere, in terms of employability and accreditation. Unfortunately, Fraser's model allows us to say that such practice prioritises an affirmative remedy to the young people's maldistribution. The trouble with this, as outlined in chapter 2, is that affirmative remedies tend to add the insult of misrecognition to maldistribution. The programmes and qualifications that the practitioners are able to facilitate and offer are doing little other than aiding the young people's insertion into 'the churn.' In this way, the practitioners may be cementing injustice rather than combating it, as such strategies do not disturb:

...the underlying mechanisms that generate them. Yet because they leave intact the deep political-economic structures that generate injustice, affirmative redistribution reforms must make surface reallocations again and again. The result is often to mark the beneficiaries as 'different' and lesser, hence to underline group divisions (Fraser, 1996: 46).

As such, not only are the practitioners reinforcing the young people's maldistribution, they leave the young people open to an added dose of misrecognition.

What Fraser's framework also allows us to see is the 'silences' located in the spheres of recognition and representation. The practitioners are unable to work with the young people to respond to the stigma, the disrespect and the cultural domination that they are enduring. The best example of this is Catherine who, in her work with the young Sikh women, finds herself working towards pre-determined, low-level qualifications

rather than addressing the numerous cultural pressures and expectations limiting the freedom of the young women she works with.

Connected to this, Fraser (2014c) in more recent writing has been at pains to develop the idea of a capitalist *society*, rather than simply conceiving of a purely capitalist *economy* (building on the idea of Marx's 'hidden abode'). One fundamental component of this is the ways in which capitalism reproduces itself and youth work in the guise described above is one element of this:

Central here is the work of socializing the young, building communities, producing and reproducing the shared meanings, affective dispositions and horizons of value that underpin social cooperation. In capitalist societies much, though not all, of this activity goes on outside the market, in households, neighbourhoods and a host of public institutions, including schools and childcare centres...social-reproductive activity is absolutely necessary to the existence of waged work, the accumulation of surplus value and the functioning of capitalism as such...much like 'original accumulation,' therefore, social reproduction is an indispensable background condition for the possibility of capitalist production. (p61)

Modern capitalism, conceived in this way is an institutionalised social order. Many writers argue in its current iteration, it relies upon the existence of a permanently precarious 'reserve army' of people in insecure, unskilled, low-paid work and various employability training programmes - of which young people make up a large proportion (Simmons and Smyth, 2016; Ainley, 2018; Squires and Goldsmith, 2018). There is a danger here that practitioners working with young people to gain low-level qualifications that take them into the churn may be contributing to its continued existence and subsequently to the maldistribution and misrecognition of those they work with.

However, I will finish by arguing that it is the silence of 'representation' that is perhaps the most troubling, because youth work is committed to empowering young people – particularly young marginalised people (Deuchar and Ellis, 2013; Wood et al, 2015). The young people's lack of political voice is fundamentally a matter of injustice. As Fraser (2014a) argues:

...ordinary people are not just objects of the designs of the great, but political subjects; that they deserve a decisive say in the matters that concern them in common; that they have the capacity to mobilise communicative power both as a means to effect change and as an end in itself. (p155)

It is here that practitioners working with young people are perhaps best placed to intervene in the vicious circles of injustice, as portrayed in figure 3. Not only to facilitate the young people's 'voice' but to work alongside them in order that they can fully explicate the maldistributive and misrecognition injustices impeding their participatory parity. Such work could, at the very least, challenge the epistemological fallacy obfuscating the structural mechanisms which continue to shape their lives (Bryant and Ellard, 2015). Such work could also bring young people together, promote association and help turn 'private troubles' into 'public issues' (Wright-Mills, 1959). As Cooper (2012) writes:

...the challenge for youth workers is to rise above or work around current neoliberal policy discourses and practices, so that they can then work in ways that enable young people to realise that their concerns are collective concerns requiring collective solutions. (p67)

Despite the noose of funding tightening, this remains the challenge for practitioners working with young people. The usefulness of Fraser's framework for practitioners is locating where injustice exists in the lives of the young people and working with them to name these and to work collectively towards addressing them. The power of youth workers to address systematic structural inequalities is extremely limited and participatory parity is a utopian standard. But the framework allows practitioners to name, situate and begin to address where young people's participatory parity is being impeded. Unfortunately from the evidence presented here, the context within which practitioners are operating in is limiting their ability to 'start where young people are at' and therefore begin this process.

### **8.2.5 Do the experiences of young people move beyond Fraser's framework?**

#### **How adequate is Fraser's framework for capturing injustice?**

As this thesis has shown, Fraser's framework has proven an excellent and comprehensive tool for systematically analysing where the spheres of injustice interact and reinforce one another. As Rosa (2017) suggests:

With her sharp and comprehensive analysis of the three dimensions of injustice and participation, Nancy Fraser...provides us with a most reliable compass in the search for a better form of social arrangements, for a better society – and for a better life, as it were. Full participation, on this account, requires the opportunity, the resources and the power to appropriate the material, the social, and the political (or spiritual) world. (p164)

For the young people in this study, the framework has shone a light on the ways in which they are denied the opportunity to participate fully in the norms of society. But, as researchers looking at the lives of young people it is critical that we situate young people's agency in any study of their lives (Heath et al, 2009). Again, Evans' (2007) concept of 'bounded agency' is instructive here, to think of the ways in which young people negotiate their social landscape, influenced but not determined by their environment. Therefore, it is imperative when utilising Fraser's framework to locate the fourth 'R' of *resistance* in the centre of her model, to analyse the ways in which young people speak back to – and act through – any injustices impacting on them. As this study has shown, young people do act back on injustices, even if these acts are small and sometimes seemingly counter-productive. Young people are not social dupes, nor are they passive as the winds of structural forces buffet them. As this thesis has shown, these young people are remarkably resilient and are exhibiting extraordinary agency in their attempts to move on in life despite the continuous impediments that they encounter. It is imperative that this is captured in any study that seeks to examine injustice in the lives of young people growing up today. To not do so would not only impoverish any study, it would also do the young people an injustice.

### **8.3 Concluding Remarks**

In her most recent phase of writing, Fraser (2014a; 2014b; 2016a; 2016b; Fraser and Jaeggi, 2018) has moved beyond the critical framework that is the spine of this study, from the question of 'how' injustice manifests to the 'where' and 'why' as she aims to build on and expand the work of Marx and Karl Polanyi. Through this, she aims to provide a new multidimensional critical-theoretical analysis of what she terms the historically specific phase of 'globalising neoliberal capitalism.' And this work is essential. As Fraser (2016a) notes in conversation:

When you look around the world today, I look straight and see that there are a lot of reasons to be very, very, worried. If the climate science is right, we really don't have a lot of time. We are living in a world that seems systematically incapable of dealing even with that issue, let alone all the other issues...I don't know about you, but we have more inequality, we are losing rights that we had before...but the point of doing critical theory is based on the hope that by clarifying what is really going on, by marking the distance between what is and what ought to be, or what could be, you give

people some tools to think differently and act differently. Whether this is enough to make a difference, we'll see. (p12)

As Fraser argues, it is globalising neoliberal capitalism that requires to be theorised – and it is this that is the ‘hum’ in the background of this thesis (McEwan, 2018). From the individualism that defines the landscape through which the young people tread, to the performative terrain that the practitioners must negotiate, its tendrils are far reaching, even if at times these can appear opaque. Fraser’s critical framework has been a potent tool for critically analysing where injustice exists in the lives of the young people and in revealing the conditions that set the stage for the practitioner’s intervention. Fraser (2018) suggests that in the current context we are witnessing an interregnum, as we are caught between a ‘progressive neo-liberalism’ and a ‘reactionary populism’ that has seen the election of Trump in the US, Brexit in the UK and the rise of right-wing populists in various parts of the globe. For young people growing up here in Scotland, how this plays out over the next few years will be critical in terms of the influence this has on their life, and the opportunities available to them. If history is any guide it is those on the margins who typically bear the brunt when any crisis rears its head. Fraser’s framework is a useful and critical tool for analysing the impact of neo-liberalism and the injustice it inevitably brings. But the question of what can be done to combat these injustices remains to be answered. Perhaps this next phase of Fraser’s work will provide some guidance?





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## Appendice 1 – Interview Schedule for the Young People

### Interview questions

#### KEY:

- **Narrative Questions (These were asked in every interview)**
- **Supplementary Questions (These are examples of questions asked to follow up on pertinent points)**

#### Questions

- Starter Questions
  - Tell me a little about yourself?
  - Parents/Guardians jobs?
  - Where do they live?
  - How long have they stayed in the local area
  - What do they like or dislike about Porttown?
- What is going on for you right now? What are the most important things in your life?
  - How do you spend your days just now? Describe a typical day to me, if you don't mind?
- Tell me about your time in school. What were the positives and negatives of that time?
  - What were you doing?
  - What did you want to be doing, if different?
- Tell me about the period immediately after you finished school. What were your immediate priorities? And what were the most important things going on for you at that time?
  - Did you ever consider going to university?
- The labour market is said to be challenging for young people at the moment. Tell me about your search for work so far.
  - Has there been anything which has helped or hindered your search for work?
  - How have you been treated by the people you have been working for?
  - What would you like to do, if different from what you are doing now?
- Tell me about your experiences on any training programmes you have participated in? Did you enjoy these? What were the positives and negatives?
- How do you feel about how you have been treated by agencies since leaving school?
  - What agencies have you come into contact with? Youth club? Job Centre? SDS? Any other – health etc.?
  - How do you think/feel about the way in which young people are viewed, in general, within our society?
  - How do you think you are viewed by agencies that you have come into contact with since leaving school?
  - Do you think you are respected in society? Why do you think this way? Can you point to any experiences to support your view?
- Young people are said to be uninterested in politics. What do you think of politics and do you participate in politics?
  - Do you think young people have the opportunity to have their voices heard in politics?
  - How much power do you think you have to shape what happens in your local community? Do you want to be able to?
  - Have you had any opportunities to participate in politics? Would or do you want to have the opportunity?
  - Do you get involved in any political discussions online?
  - What do you think of politicians?

- Tell me about your hopes for the future?
  - What is/are your priority/priorities now?
  - How do they envision their future?
  - What do you want from life?
  - Is there anything holding you back from achieving your goals?

## Appendice 2 – Interview Schedule for Practitioners

### Interview questions

- Starter Questions
  - How does working in Porttown compare with other jobs? Is there anything special about working in this area? Helps or hindrances?
  - How long and what have they been doing in youth work?
  - Tell me about your current role
  - Primary responsibilities?
- Values?
  - What drives them?
  - Why do they do youth work?
  - What do they see as their primary motivation for the work they do?
  - Are they able to fulfil the above?
  - Helps and hindrances?
- What do they see as the purpose of their work with young people?
  - What do they see as the most important priority of the work they do?
  - What do they think the young people value most about their role and the work that is undertaken in their agency?
  - What do they think is the agency's main priorities with the young people?
  - What do they think are the priorities of the young people that they work with?
    - Do you see the work you're doing with them as addressing these issues?
    - Are there barriers to this?
  - What do they think funding priorities are with their young people?
  - Do the needs of policy and the needs of the young people clash at all? Are you able to respond to both without impacting on the needs of the other?
  - Is there any tension between their own values and funding priorities?
  - What do they think are government priorities? Agency priorities? How do these fit into their day to day work?
- Who is determining the work they carry out with young people?
- What do they enjoy about the work?
  - What do they not enjoy about the work?
- How do they feel about partnership working?
  - Is it something they have had first-hand experience of? What have been the positives and negatives (if any?)
- Future Stuff
  - What do you see as the main challenges facing the young people you work with in Porttown?
  - What do you see as the biggest challenges facing you in your role?
  - What are your hopes/fears for the future in your role? As a youth worker?
  - What changes would you like to see, if any, moving forward in the field?



### **Appendice 3 – The Young People**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Gender</u></b>
Adam	19	Male
Amanda	17	Female
Craig	17	Male
David	20	Male
Divya	23	Female
Donna	18	Female
Ed	19	Male
James	20	Male
Katie	17	Female
Kyle	19	Male
Lana	23	Female
Marie	23	Female
Martin	24	Male
Maya	23	Female
Megan	18	Female
Ryan	18	Male
Scott	18	Male
Simon	21	Male
Sue	19	Female
Val	22	Female

## Appendice 4 – The Practitioners

Pseudonym	Qualification	Organisation	Youth Work Setting	Areas of Practice
<b>Frank</b>	BA Informal Education (Youth Work and CLD)	Voluntary Sector	Centre based; School-based	Health and well-being; Generic Youth Groups; School based group-work
<b>Alice</b>	BA (Hons) Community Education	Voluntary Sector	Centre-based; Community-based; School-based	Befriending; School-based group-work
<b>Will</b>	BA (Hons) Community Education	Voluntary Sector	Centre-based; Community-based; School-based	Generic Youth Groups; School-based group-work
<b>Anna</b>	BA (Hons) Community Education	Local Authority	Centre based	Generic Youth Groups
<b>Sarah</b>	BA (Hons) Community Education	Voluntary Sector	Centre-based; School-based	Employability Work; Generic Youth Group; School-based group-work
<b>Ella</b>	BA (Hons) Community Education	Voluntary Sector	Centre-based; School-based	Employability Work; Generic Youth Group; School-based group-work
<b>Catherine</b>	BA (Hons) Community Education	Voluntary Sector	Centre-based; School-based	Work with Sikh Young Women; School-based group-work

## **Appendice 5 – Interview Transcript – Adam (Original)**

Alan: So Adam, just to get settled in a bit, would you just tell me a bit about yourself?

Adam: Well, my name's Adam, from Porttown, born here, in the Castle, just around the road, it's been knocked doon, aye it's no good...(long pause)...

Alan: No good? Why not?

Adam: They're building aw these new hooses, it'll never be the same, never be the same, the Castle was the Castle, you could always go there if you were bored or anything like that but you cannae do that now, aw these posh people moving in, it's no normal, and it'll no be called the Castle either, it'll be something like...(long pause)...I dunno what it'll be called but you cannae always win, you just see it all the time but you cannae do anything about it, eh? Well, ah cannae anyway, they're no gonna listen to a 16 year auld laddie, they shouldnae be doing it, they're just ruining, there's loads of people who have lived in the Castle that now dinnae see each other, that used to be really good friends, like ah know that first hand through ma brother, like he doesnae see any of his old pals, some of them have been moved away to another area, some to other parts of the city, It ruins friendships, like, you shouldnae do that to people, they shouldnae have the right to just make people go, especially something like that, a good place, it's maybe a horrible place but a good place.

Alan: What do you mean by that?

Adam: There's crime, loads of different things, but if you were known there you were always safe, never been harmed, ah was alright, everyone knew me and ma brother as well, he's 19, he still stays with me, same as my sister. Not that we were big, mad people, just that we were known, aye...(long pause)...loads of things got lost, you'd go there and you were oot, as they say, people used to be aboot, even when the lights went on, hide and seek, shite like that, stuff like that, a community but a community that people didnae trust, people that wirnae from the inside of the Castle, people would walk past and be like 'wow, that's a state' but if you didnae annoy them, they'll no annoy you, they'll no dae anything to you. If you get to know them, you'd be alright. Few bad things did happen though. The hooses were horrible, big brown flats but, who cares eh? These changes that are happening, who are they for? I think, personally, they're for foreigners,

aye, who knows? People with money, foreigners or tourists. But no matter how many changes ah wouldn't want to be anywhere else, ah always want to be here in Porttown. It's the best place...\*laughs\*...naewhere else can beat Porttown, everything's here. I dunno why I'd want to stay, it's probably because ah grew up here, but, ah dunno, it's a safe place, like...(long pause)...ah ken most people, can walk doon ma street, ken maist folk on ma street, everything like that, why would you want to move away?

Alan: What about the negative things about Porttown, if any man?

Adam: There's a few things, but ah cannae think of them, ah think quite positive about Porttown...(long pause)...

Alan: That's good. That's good. What about your Mum and Dad? Did they grow up in Porttown?

Adam: Ma Mum moved here when she was young, from Belleview, ma Dad grew up in Porttown, but ah dae really see ma Dad, aye, they split up when, when ah was about 5, ah see him in the street but dae really talk to him, he tries to come into the hoos but ma Mum just tells him to boost. My Mum does well better without my Dad, he's addicted to drugs, so it was better for ma Mum to no' be wi' him, she didnae want us growing up in that environment, she doesnae do anything at all, he takes herion, crack and whatever else. Aye, ah dinne like ma Dad...(long pause)...ma Mum never let us see anything, ma Mum, when he was in jail, she went to the jail and said, you're in here, so ah'm taking the house, took the lease in and she said you're signing it over so it's just ma house, so he signed it over, nae questions asked and when he came out of jail she said it was time for you to leave and he said OK, he still tries to come to the house when he's straight but ma Mum just cannae be bothered with him, ah would knock him out if ah seen him in the house, he can be classed as a jake.

Alan: It must have been challenging, your Mum being on her own with three kids?

Adam: Aye, it's not been sustainable, ma Mum has a job, it's not sustainable how much she has to pay for aw these things 'cos ah've got a job, ma brother's got a job, we pay the rent, we give her digs, nothing compared to what she has to pay to keep the house. She's supervisor of a shop....(long pause)...ma Mum always made sure we were first, she would go without, to make sure we had...\*long pause\*...if she didnae have enough

money for a shop, she'd always make sure we had enough before her, we were always eaten before her, so she would go without food, sometimes for 2 or 3 days, so we could eat. That was only if there was a struggle in the house, if we didnae have money or that. We're nothing like that now, she has a job and so do we. She only got this job 2 and a half years ago, she was on sick for 7 years, she was no well. She just had back problems, loads of problems with her body, personal problems...(long pause)...and they went away, got dealt with by the doctor and so she works now, she's still got a bad back but she can deal with it.

Alan: What is going on for you right now? What are the most important things in your life?

Adam: I'm at college, and washing dishes, Kitchen Porter kind of thing, ah want to be a fully qualified landscaper, that's what ah want to be, ah dinnae want to be washing dishes all ma life...\*long pause\*...

Alan: I can understand that. Tell me about your time in school. What were the positives and negatives of that time?

Adam: At school, the first few years were difficult, because they said I was severely dyslexic and that, they needed to figure out how to help me, so first and second year they didn't know where to get the right help and things like that and when they did it was fine, I did a one-to-one reading group and things like that and then, from there it was alright, no problems. When I was younger, dyslexia, that was the problem, not with people or anything like that, there's always a bit of misbehaviour – to a certain extent, when it came in to 4<sup>th</sup> year I missed school a bit, I gave up a bit, there's nae point in me going, ah wisnae learning any more. When I got to school, I would either go down to the hub, which is doon the stairs in...[school]...and just sit there and no do anything, this was two, three months before I left school. Like ah went in a few times, ah just wisnae doing any work, so there was nae point, ah could just sit in ma hoos and watch telly. By this time ah had already sat aw the courses ah was going to sit anyway, so, that was why I was sitting in the hub, so ah wisnae practising for exams or anything like that so ah didnae see the point in going in.

Alan: Aye, sounds fair enough Adam. What about the period immediately after you finished school. What were your immediate priorities? And what were the most important things going on for you at that time?

Adam: Get a job. When ah was leaving, ah wanted to get a job. Priority was to get a job. Like when ah went to speak to the worker, the women, the careers advisor, she said we can get you into college, but at this time ah wisnae wanting to go to college, ah was thinking, 'na, no really.' because, in ma heid it was like just going back to school.

Alan: Yeah...

Adam: But when I got there and went it was alright...like, it was the commuting from here to Middtown, 3 days a week that was what was putting me off going to college...(long pause)...and the money...\*laughs\*...

Alan: So why did you go?

Adam: Because I wanted to become a landscape gardener, but they didnae gie me the right course, and things like that, it was a kerfuffle...\*laughs\*...

Alan: OK. So what are you doing?

Adam: Loads of classroom stuff and things like that, ah'm just no good in a classroom but when ah'm oot doing the practical work, ah'm fine, ah can dae it, just no in a classroom but there's mair classroom work than there is practical, quite an intense college...(long pause)...like if ah went and got an apprenticeship ah would be really happy, ah'm looking, but even for apprenticeships you need qualifications, even if ah can get any apprenticeship, give me a start ah'd try it and see what it's like. and it costs too much money to get there...and to get back...they're trying to get this coach...\*long pause\*...but ah've got a job now, so I can afford to go to college now if I want to, it would just be, expensive, it would be at least half ma wage all the time, it would be, a good sum of money, ah have to get the bus to the train station and get on the train, but ah would just get a day ticket for the bus and a return on the train...(long pause)...

Alan: OK...so can you just talk me through what you've been up to since you left school  
Adam?

Adam: When ah left school ah did an eh...work agreement with Shona so they can give you an EMA. Ah did that for two months as a gardener, ah was getting £60 a fortnight, ah was doing three days a week, what time did I get up? Ah hink ah would start at ten and finish about 3, 3 days a week, for 60 quid or whatever...\*long pause\*...which is shit. Ah needed to do it though to get ma money, at the time it was all about money, ah'm no gonna lie, money, CV, ah did that for 3 months, it was alright, ah liked it but had to leave 'cos ah started college...(long pause)...it was only a thing...that the...[centre]...did, Get Back to Work for the job centre, but ah did it as an Activity Agreement because I had to do something to get ma 60 quid a fortnight, so...(long pause)...that was the reason ah did it. The people there were alright, they were all good like, they were all people who were on the job centre that did it, so they were all trying to find work, or a new job, or had to do it to get their money, so ah think that's a new thing that the job centre do, you have to go and actually do something voluntary to get your money, or slavery! But, well, ah did it eh, never dae it again for how much ah got for it. If they said can you come back to help us it would be a different story but...(long pause)...soul destroying...

Alan: And after that you went to college? But you were working at the same time?

Adam: So aye, cleaning dishes, kitchen porter, been doing that for 2 and a bit months at the same time as college, ah needed money so ah spoke to the guy that I work with. So the guy ah work for is ma best pals step-dad, 'cos ah dae folks gardens on the side too, cut their grass and hedges and stuff like that and eh, ah was doing his garden and ah said, right, ah'm still at college and ah need ah job, are you looking for people in your restaurant and he said actually I am, looking for a kitchen porter and he said he'd get in touch and he did and said can you start in two days, so ah got the job. It's no a job ah want likes. Ah just dinnae enjoy being inside, ah would rather be outside, and especially cleaning dishes in a hot kitchen...\*laughs\*...but ah cannae grumble with the wage, ah get above the minimum wage for ma age, like ah get £6.20, ah should only get £3.50 or something for ma age cleaning dishes. Ah'm the only one that does it, all by hand, big job. When ah work it's usually 5, 6 hours, sometimes after college, sometimes...(long pause)...whatever. Ah can be up at half 7 in the morning, finish college, get into the city at half 5 and then go to work until half 12 or half 1, but...(long pause)...and then maybe up for college the next day. But it's a zero hours contract and like, sometimes on the day that I work, like sometimes on the day...(long pause)...so, maybe, say ah worked last

night and he says right, or sometimes he'll tell me in the restaurant, right, you're working the morn, be here for, say, 4 o'clock or when I go in the morn, he'll say again, be here for 10 in the morning to clean the kitchen, give it a good clean...

Alan: OK.

Adam: So it's never just, a stable shift, never just the same, it's weird, no good, 'cos how am ah meant to dae anything? Legit, how am I meant to have a life if I'm working 5, then 2, then 5, then 7, then 8, how am ah meant to dae anything? and ah never know when ah'm working and it's never a reliable income if you're working these random shifts. Like ah want a stable amount of money, ah dinnae want to be having £200, then next month £500, then mibbe one month having £100, see that nae good. So that's another thing, what are you meant to dae if you dinne know how much money you're gonna be making, you cannae dae anything with yourself? And say you want to go somewhere with your family and then you find out you're working, how can you plan to go oot? If you dinnae know that you're working? Sometimes ma boss is alright because ah know him, so if ah ever really need to take a day off ah just say to him, but ah cannae just say to him if ah want to go oot with ma pals that ah cannae come in the day, so in the last two and a half months ah've seen ma pal aboot twice, two times 'cos she's got a full-time job and ah've got a job that ah dinnae know when ah'm working, so when she's off ah'm either working or at college, her hours are just mad as well because she's the manager at McDonald's. So you've got stuff to do in your life if you have a more sustainable job, and if you ken that you're gonna be at work, 7 in the morning until, say 5 at night, you know you can make a routine, you could say to your pals I'll meet you 3 days a week so I can go and dae that, and I know I have to be home at a certain time to get a decent sleep but if you're working a zero hour contract job, with this job that ah've got it's sometimes 10 in the morning until 4 and then sometimes a split shift and go back to work at 6, what ah'm a meant to dae with masel? Who want to be daein that, you've no got a life. Ah understand if you've nae pals, then you can dae that...\*laughs\*...

Alan: That's really interesting...

Adam: Like ah want a job that starts in the morning and that finishes at like 4 or 5 so ah can then see ma pals, go home, sleep at a reasonable time and then, go back to work in the morning and do the same so you've always got your night to do what you want and



weekends. Nothing like a job washing dishes...\*laughs\*...ah've looked on Indeed and other websites for jobs, but there's no anything, really, ah was gonna go for a binman job but you need to be 18, just all health and safety...

Alan: What agencies have you come into contact with? You mentioned the Job Centre?

Adam: Ah dinnae ever want to be in the job centre, it's just, no that's there's anything wrong with going to the job centre, ah just dinnae want to go on the brew, ah want to have a job like, a sustainable job. Now if you miss a meeting and you get sanctioned, you'll no have money for 4 months, or whatever it is, then you have to live on pennies and that. Na, no thanks. Ma Mum was on the brew when she wisnae well, she knows it, she was sanctioned, for not being able to make meetings. Sometimes she wasn't feeling good, health reasons and they still sanctioned her, they dinnae care, ah dunno if you make a reasonable statement but they still sanction you. Ah think that's why she was determined to get better and get a job because, before she got a job they sanctioned her and they asked her how she was living and she said 'ah'm no living, ah'm just surviving and no really surviving, well ah'm here but ah'm no surviving' and she broke doon greetin' and...(long pause)...she was depressed and they said OK, we'll help you and then she got better and got a job. She went to the doctor and they sent her to a chiropractor and they found...(long pause)...gave her medication, like she had all these tests and shit like that. They make families struggle, they would see you without, with nowt. I hopefully never will. Ah've no got anything against people who genuinely need it, need to go on the brew, ah just dinnae want to be on the brew. No daein anything is just no for me.

Alan: Did you ever consider going to university? Has anyone in your family been?

Adam: Ah know loads of people that have gone on to university, no for me, I just want a job. No, some of ma family might have, ma Gran's sister, she's a headmistress at two schools, but ah never speak to her...(long pause)...but very posh, very well spoken, ma Grandad probably went to university but it's never been something for me, no for me, just want a job. Honestly, it's to help ma Mum and ah hate seeing her struggle, she's got herself back on track but that it my first priority, to help ma Mum, for me but for ma Mum as well. Ah dinnae ever want to be, ah dinnae want to rely on others, anyone else, ah want to be doing things for masel', like when ah went on holiday, naebody gave me

anything, like ah'd saved it all mase', that's what I mean by stability, having ma own stuff.

Alan: Yeah, I can well understand that, man. I can well understand. I want to move on to another topic, if that is alright? I want to find out what you think of politics...

Adam: \*interrupting\* ...to be honest, ah dinnae really know very much about politics, ah wouldnae feel confident having an argument about politics, or know what ah was actually talking about, people just argue. I'm the sort of person if ah dinnae know something then ah'll no argue with you. With the independence referendum, well, ah knew it would have affected us but ah dinnae know in what way, how it will affect us, voting to go independent or no, ah know it'll affect us but ah dinnae ken what it is but ah didnae know what ah'd have been voting for, people say it's not good to not vote but ah'm no voting if ah dinnae know what I'm voting for, because it can, no one vote is no gonna affect the world but it's, it's deciding one or another what is gonna happen to our country, ah mean half the folk that voted to leave the EU, didnae...(long pause)...straight after the vote the most searched thing on Google was 'what does it mean to leave the EU' \*laughs\* ....they dinnae know what they're voting for... \*laughs\* ...that was the biggest thing on Google!

Alan: What about locally? Do you think you have any power to shape what happens in your local community? Do you want to be able to?

Adam: But no-one is gonna listen, I'm seen as a hoodlum probably, because ah wear tracksuits every day and cycle in the streets and have chavvy pals. It all depends on what you wear, if I walked about in a tuxedo and bow tie, well, they'd probably still be like 'what the fuck?' ... \*laughs\* ...but ah'd be able to walk through a posh community and naebody would say a thing but if ah walked through a posh community with ma track suit they'll ask questions, 'who's he?' and 'what's he daein' here?' like, what's the problem? They just see us as the people that run aboot wild in the streets, they dinnae actually know what is going on, they just see us as 'they dinnae dae anything, they just cause trouble'. If ah was walking aboot in jeans and a shirt, ah wouldnae be a chav, ah'd be a normal person, you know, wear tracksuits, wear trainers, be daft in the streets...there's always different, some people wear chivvies, people that wear fake makes...that was, years ago that was a chav, trying to be what you're not...fake

makes...or wears loads of gold, hoop earrings or big sovies, these days no-one wears them, well apart from some casuals, but if ah was in an argument with a posh, mair upper class person ah would get called a chav, but ah'm no a chav. Ah dunno even know who it is that runs this community, ah ken one councillor, he comes to the...[centre]...regularly, he's been the councillor for 14 years or something, ah cannae remember his name. Some of them are alright, like the young lassie, from Glasgow or something, Mhari Black, she's good, she's always arguing the point that lower quality people arnae any different, to upper quality people. Ah like to see that there isnae any difference, ah like that, we should all have the same rights and qualities and shouldnae be any difference in what you work. Why do we get less money than you's? Like ah'm 16 and ah'd get about £3.50 for doing the exact same work as you, or anyone else, we...\*long pause\*...you could be, ah could be daein mair work than you and ah'm getting less money for it, ah dinnae think that's fair, they say that adults have got more responsibility, how? Not in this world they havnae, people...(long pause)...some folk get chucked oot their hooses and have to fend for themselves for £3 something an hour? Ah dinnae think so. But I like Mhairi Black but she's one of those politicians who shouts out what is true but nae-one wants to listen to her. But, ah dinnae actually keep up wi' what's going on with politicians, it's when I go through Facebook and Mhairi Black comes up I'll watch her because she's cool, she's always arguing. They need mair young politicians, obviously they need the quality, but they need more young one's, because all these auld women and men dinnae know what they're talking about, like what's actually going on in these neighbourhoods, schemie bits, they dinnae know what's going on, people act out violence because there's nowt else to do.

Alan: ...\*laughs\*...it sounds like you are quite political when you start talking like that Adam. That's interesting. Ok, moving on to the last question now, thinking about now and the future, can I ask Adam, what are your priorities now and what do you hope for in the future?

Adam: ...(long pause)...ah've got quite a lot, ah'd like to start ma ain business and, you never know if it's gonna be successful so you always need a back-up plan. Money's a big thing, but it's no a priority but it's just ah like to have money, someone that says they dinnae dae anything for money are lying, point blank lying. You cannae just go and volunteer, you wouldnae have anything. I dunno like...\*sighs\*...ah dinnae ken, got quite

a lot but you just have to roll with it and sort out what's important. Ah need to figure out getting a new job, to figure out what's going on with college, random stuff that you just have to deal with. Life. But I should be alright, I want to make a few changes...(long pause)...like...changes, hard to explain the things you want to change...(long pause)...I want to have ma ain business, gardener, landscaper, to have ma business, and that it's doing well, then, and have a sustainable life, like life is fine, a good life and that everything is going alright, I would like to have my own house, aye still in Porttown, in fact, you know what, this is the truth, if I could, if the council let you buy houses, I would buy the house i'm in and do it up. I would let my Mum stay and I would like a car and a partner, dinnae want bairns, want to live ma life, ah want to have a life, not going out all the time if you're running your own business though, you cannae be no responsible or the business wouldn't last.

Alan: Is there anything you can see that is going to stop you achieving all this?

Adam: Money. Money is the big thing 'cos opening a gardening business, people think it's just cutting grass and hedges but it's much more than that.

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Alan: I just want to follow up on a couple of things, man. I was wondering, would you consider yourself to be a Porttowner? And what qualifies someone to be a Porttowner, do you think?

Adam: Aye, I'm a Porttowner, you just call yourself a Porttowner if you've lived here all your life, but not necessarily, I think it's in yer ain mind, but you might not be classed as one by other people.

Alan: And, thinking back. Can you tell me, did you learn about politics in school?

Adam: Well, you do a wee bit in PSE but, you learn about like, police, how they treat people, but not about politics.

## Appendice 6 – Interview Transcript – Adam (in chronological order)

Well, my name's Adam, from Porttown, born here, in the Castle<sup>24</sup>, just aroond the road, it's been knocked doon, aye it's no good, they're building aw these new hooses, it'll never be the same, never be the same, the Castle was the Castle, you could always go there if you were bored or anything like that but you cannae do that now, aw these posh people moving in, it's no normal, and it'll no be called the Castle either, it'll be something like...(long pause)...I dunno what it'll be called but you cannae always win, you just see it all the time but you cannae do anything about it, eh? Well, ah cannae anyway, they're no gonna listen to a 16 year auld laddie, they shouldnae be doing it, they're just ruining, there's loads of people who have lived in the Castle that now dinnae see each other, that used to be really good friends, like ah know that first hand through ma brother, like he doesnae see any of his old pals, some of them have been moved away to another area, some to other parts of the city, it ruins friendships, like, you shouldnae do that to people, they shouldnae have the right to just make people go, especially something like that, a good place, it's maybe a horrible place but a good place.

There's crime, loads of different things, but if you were known there you were always safe, never been harmed, ah was alright, everyone knew me and ma brother as well, he's 19, he still stays with me, same as my sister. Not that we were big, mad people, just that we were known, aye...(long pause)...loads of things got lost, you'd go there and you were oot, as they say, people used to be aboot, even when the lights went on, hide and seek, shite like that, stuff like that, a community but a community that people didnae trust, people that wirnae from the inside of the Castle, people would walk past and be like 'wow, that's a state,' but if you didnae annoy them, they'll no annoy you, they'll no dae anything to you. If you get to know them, you'd be alright. Few bad things did happen though. The hooses were horrible, big brown flats but, who cares eh? These changes that are happening, who are they for? I think, personally, they're for foreigners, aye, who knows? People with money, foreigners or tourists. But no matter how many changes ah wouldn't want to be anywhere else, ah always want to be here in Porttown. It's the best place...\*laughs\*...naewhere else can beat Porttown, everything's here. Aye, I'm a Porttownner, you just call yourself a Porttownner if you've lived here all your life, but

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<sup>24</sup> Name changed here to protect anonymity – The Castle was a notorious area (for drug use and crime) within Porttown that was demolished in the early 2010s.

not necessarily, I think it's in yer ain mind, but you might not be classed as one by other people. I dunno why I'd want to stay, it's probably because ah grew up here, but, ah dunno, it's a safe place, like...(long pause)...ah ken most people, can walk doon ma street, ken maist folk on ma street, everything like that, why would you want to move away?

Ma Mum moved here when she was young, from Belleview<sup>1</sup>, ma Dad grew up in Porttown, but ah dae really see ma Dad, aye, they split up when, when ah was about 5, ah see him in the street but dae really talk to him, he tries to come into the house but ma Mum just tells him to boost. My Mum does better without my Dad, he's addicted to drugs, so it was better for ma Mum to not be wi' him, she didnae want us growing up in that environment, she doesnae do anything at all, he takes heroin, crack and whatever else. Aye, ah dinne like ma Dad...(long pause)...ma Mum never let us see anything, ma Mum, when he was in jail, she went to the jail and said, you're in here, so ah'm taking the house, took the lease in and she said you're signing it over so it's just ma house, so he signed it over, no questions asked and when he came out of jail she said it was time for you to leave and he said OK, he still tries to come to the house when he's straight but ma Mum just cannae be bothered with him, ah would knock him out if ah seen him in the house, he can be classed as a jake. Aye, it's not been sustainable, ma Mum has a job, it's not sustainable how much she has to pay for aw these things 'cos ah've got a job, ma brother's got a job, we pay the rent, we give her digs, nothing compared to what she has to pay to keep the house. She's supervisor of a shop...(long pause)...ma Mum always made sure we were first, she would go without, to make sure we had...(long pause)...if she didnae have enough money for a shop, she'd always make sure we had enough before her, we were always eating before her, so she would go without food, sometimes for 2 or 3 days, so we could eat. That was only if there was a struggle in the house, if we didnae have money or that. We're nothing like that now, she has a job and so do we. She only got this job 2 and a half years ago, she was on sick for 7 years, she was no well. She just had back problems, loads of problems with her body, personal problems...(long pause)...and they went away, got dealt with by the doctor and so she works now, she's still got a bad back but she can deal with it.

At school, the first few years were difficult, because they said I was severely dyslexic, and that they needed to figure out how to help me, so first and second year they didn't

know where to get the right help and things like that and when they did it was fine, I did a one-to-one reading group and things like that and then, from there it was alright, no problems. When I was younger, dyslexia, that was the problem, not with people or anything like that, there's always a bit of misbehaviour – to a certain extent, when it came in to 4<sup>th</sup> year I missed school a bit, I gave up a bit, there's nae point in me going, ah wisnae learning any more. When I got to school, I would either go down to the hub, which is doon the stairs in...[school]...and just sit there and no do anything, this was two, three months before I left school. Like ah went in a few times, ah just wisnae doing any work, so there was nae point, ah could just sit in ma house and watch telly. By this time ah had already sat aw the courses ah was going to sit anyway, so, that was why I was sitting in the hub, so ah wisnae practising for exams or anything like that so ah didnae see the point in going in.

Get a job. When ah was leaving, ah wanted to get a job. Priority was to get a job. Like when ah went to speak to the worker, the women, the careers advisor, she said we can get you into college, but at this time ah wisnae wanting to go to college, ah was thinking, 'na, no really,' because in ma heid it was like just going back to school. But when I got there and went it was alright, like, it was the commuting from here to Middtown<sup>1</sup>, 3 days a week that was what was putting me off going to college...(long pause)...and the money...\*laughs\*...and it costs too much money to get there and to get back but they're trying to get this coach...(long pause)...but ah've got a job now, so I can afford to go to college now if I want to, it would just be, expensive, it would be at least half ma wage all the time, it would be, a good sum of money, ah have to get the bus to the train station and get on the train, but ah would just get a day ticket for the bus and a return on the train...(long pause)... I'm at college, and washing dishes, Kitchen Porter kind of thing, ah want to be a fully qualified landscaper, that's what ah want to be, ah dinnae want to be washing dishes all ma life...(long pause)... because I wanted to become a landscape gardener, but they didnae give me the right course, and things like that, it was a kerfuffle...\*laughs\*... loads of classroom stuff and things like that, ah'm just no good in a classroom but when ah'm oot doing the practical work, ah'm fine, ah can dae it, just no in a classroom but there's mair classroom work than there is practical, quite an intense college...(long pause)...like if ah went and got an apprenticeship ah would be really

happy, ah'm looking, but even for apprenticeships you need qualifications, even if ah can get any apprenticeship, give me a start ah'd try it and see what it's like.

When ah left school ah did an eh, work agreement with Shona so they can give you an EMA. Ah did that for two months as a gardener, ah was getting £60 a fortnight, ah was doing three days a week, what time did I get up? Ah think ah would start at ten and finish about 3, 3 days a week, for 60 quid or whatever...(long pause)...which is shit. Ah needed to do it though to get ma money, at the time it was all about money, ah'm no gonna lie, money, CV, ah did that for 3 months, it was alright, ah liked it but had to leave 'cos ah started college...(long pause)...it was only a thing that the...[centre]...did, Get Back to Work for the job centre, but ah did it as an Activity Agreement because I had to do something to get ma 60 quid a fortnight, so...(long pause)...that was the reason ah did it. The people there were alright, they were all good like, they were all people who were on the job centre that did it, so they were all trying to find work, or a new job, or had to do it to get their money, so ah think that's a new thing that the job centre do, you have to go and actually do something voluntary to get your money, or slavery! But, well, ah did it eh, never dae it again for how much ah got for it. If they said can you come back to help us it would be a different story but...(long pause)...soul destroying. Ah dinnae ever want to be back in the job centre, it's just, no that's there's anything wrong with going to the job centre, ah just dinnae want to go on the brew<sup>25</sup>, ah want to have a job like, a sustainable job. Now if you miss a meeting and you get sanctioned, you'll no have money for 4 months, or whatever it is, then you have to live on pennies and that. Na, no thanks. Ma Mum was on the brew when she wisnae well, she knows it, she was sanctioned, for not being able to make meetings. Sometimes she wasn't feeling good, health reasons and they still sanctioned her, they dinnae care, ah dunno if you make a reasonable statement but they still sanction you. Ah think that's why she was determined to get better and get a job because, before she got a job they sanctioned her and they asked her how she was living and she said 'ah'm no living, ah'm just surviving and no really surviving, well ah'm here but ah'm no surviving' and she broke doon greetin' and...(long pause)...she was depressed and they said OK, we'll help you and then she got better and got a job. She went to the doctor and they sent her to a chiropractor and they found...(long pause)...gave her medication, like she had all these

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<sup>25</sup> 'The brew' is a slang term for unemployment benefit.



tests and shit like that. They make families struggle, they would see you without, with nowt. I hopefully never will. Ah've no got anything against people who genuinely need it, need to go on the brew, ah just dinnae want to be on the brew. No daein anything is just no for me.

So aye, cleaning dishes, kitchen porter, been doing that for 2 and a bit months at the same time as college, ah needed money so ah spoke to the guy that I work with. So the guy ah work for is ma best pals step-dad, 'cos ah dae folks gardens on the side too, cut their grass and hedges and stuff like that and eh, ah was doing his garden and ah said, right, ah'm still at college and ah need ah job, are you looking for people in your restaurant and he said actually I am, looking for a kitchen porter and he said he'd get in touch and he did and said can you start in two days, so ah got the job. It's no a job ah want likes. Ah just dinnae enjoy being inside, ah would rather be outside, and especially cleaning dishes in a hot kitchen...\*laughs\*...but ah cannae grumble with the wage, ah get above the minimum wage for ma age, like ah get £6.20, ah should only get £3.50 or something for ma age cleaning dishes. Ah'm the only one that does it, all by hand, big job. When ah work it's usually 5, 6 hours, sometimes after college, sometimes...(long pause)...whatever. Ah can be up at half 7 in the morning, finish college, get into the city at half 5 and then go to work until half 12 or half 1, but...(long pause)...and then maybe up for college the next day.

But it's a zero hours contract and like, sometimes on the day that I work, like sometimes on the day...(long pause)...so, maybe, say ah worked last night and he says right, or sometimes he'll tell me in the restaurant, right, you're working the morn, be here for, say, 4 o'clock or when I go in the morn, he'll say again, be here for 10 in the morning to clean the kitchen, give it a good clean. So it's never just, a stable shift, never just the same, it's weird, no good, 'cos how am ah meant to dae anything? Legit, how am I meant to have a life if I'm working 5, then 2, then 5, then 7, then 8, how am ah meant to dae anything? So you've got stuff to do in your life if you have a more sustainable job, and if you ken that you're gonna be at work, 7 in the morning until, say 5 at night, you know you can make a routine, you could say to your pals I'll meet you 3 days a week so I can go and dae that, and I know I have to be home at a certain time to get a decent sleep but if you're working a zero hour contract job, with this job that ah've got it's sometimes 10 in the morning until 4 and then sometimes a split shift and go back to work at 6, what

ah'm a meant to dae with masel? Who want to be daein that, you've no got a life. Ah understand if you've nae pals, then you can dae that...\*laughs\*...and ah never know when ah'm working and it's never a reliable income if you're working these random shifts. Like ah want a stable amount of money, ah dinnae want to be having £200, then next month £500, then mibbe one month having £100, see that nae good? So that's another thing, what are you meant to dae if you dinne know how much money you're gonna be making, you cannae dae anything with yourself? And say you want to go somewhere with your family and then you find out you're working, how can you plan to go oot? If you dinnae know that you're working? Sometimes ma boss is alright because ah know him, so if ah ever really need to take a day off ah just say to him, but ah cannae just say to him if ah want to go oot with ma pals that ah cannae come in the day, so in the last two and a half months ah've seen ma pal aboot twice, two times 'cos she's got a full-time job and ah've got a job that ah dinnae know when ah'm working, so when she's off ah'm either working or at college, her hours are just mad as well because she's the manager at McDonald's. Like ah want a job that starts in the morning and that finishes at like 4 or 5 so ah can then see ma pals, go home, sleep at a reasonable time and then, go back to work in the morning and do the same so you've always got your night to do what you want and weekends. Nothing like a job washing dishes...\*laughs\*...ah've looked on Indeed and other websites for jobs, but there's no anything, really, ah was gonna go for a binman job but you need to be 18, just all health and safety.

Ah know loads of people that have gone on to university, no for me, I just want a job. Some of ma family might have, ma Gran's sister, she's a headmistress at two schools, but ah never speak to her...(long pause)...but very posh, very well spoken, ma Grandad probably went to university but it's never been something for me, no for me, just want a job. Honestly, it's to help ma Mum and ah hate seeing her struggle, she's got herself back on track but that it my first priority, to help ma Mum, for me but for ma Mum as well. Ah dinnae ever want to be, ah dinnae want to rely on others, anyone else, ah want to be doing things for masel', like when ah went on holiday, naebody gave me anything, like ah'd saved it all masel', that's what I mean by stability, having ma own stuff.

Why do we get less money than you's? Like ah'm 16 and ah'd get aboot £3.50 for doing the exact same work as you, or anyone else, we...(long pause)...you could be, ah could be doing mair work than you and ah'm getting less money for it, ah dinnae think that's fair,

they say that adults have got more responsibility, how? Not in this world they haven't, people...(long pause)...some folk get chucked oot their hooses and have to fend for themselves for £3 something an hour? Ah dinnae think so, to be honest, ah dinnae really know very much about politics, ah wouldnae feel confident having an argument about politics, or know what ah was actually talking about, people just argue. I'm the sort of person if ah dinnae know something then ah'll no argue with you. In school you do a wee bit in PSE<sup>26</sup> but, you learn aboot like, police, how they treat people, but not about politics. With the independence referendum, well, ah knew it would have affected us but ah dinnae know in what way, how it will affect us, voting to go independent or no, ah know it'll affect us but ah dinnae ken what it is but ah didnae know what ah'd have been voting for, people say it's not good to not vote but ah'm no voting if ah dinnae know what I'm voting for, because it can, no one vote is no gonna affect the world but it's, it's deciding one or another what is gonna happen to our country, ah mean half the folk that voted to leave the EU, didnae...(long pause)...straight after the vote the most searched thing on Google was 'what does it mean to leave the EU'...\*laughs\*...they dinnae know what they're voting for...\*laughs\*...that was the biggest thing on Google!

But, ah dinnae actually keep up wi' what's going on with politicians. Some of them are alright, like the young lassie, from Glasgow or something, Mhari Black, she's good, she's always arguing the point that lower quality people aren't different, to upper quality people. Ah like to see that there isnae any difference, ah like that, we should all have the same rights and qualities and shouldnae be any difference in what you work. But I like Mhairi Black but she's one of those politicians who shouts out what is true but no-one wants to listen to her. It's when I go through Facebook and Mhairi Black comes up I'll watch her because she's cool, she's always arguing. They need mair young politicians, obviously they need the quality, but they need more young one's, because all these auld women and men dinnae know what they're talking about, like what's actually going on in these neighbourhoods, schemie bits, they dinnae know what's going on, people act out violence because there's nowt else to do.

But no-one is gonna listen. Ah dunno even know who it is that runs this community, ah ken one councillor, he comes to the...[centre]...regularly, he's been the councillor for 14

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<sup>26</sup> Personal and social education

years or something, ah cannae remember his name. I'm seen as a hoodlum probably, because ah wear tracksuits every day and cycle in the streets and have chavvy pals. It all depends on what you wear, if I walked about in a tuxedo and bow tie, well, they'd probably still be like 'what the fuck?' ...\*laughs\* ...but ah'd be able to walk through a posh community and naebody would say a thing but if ah walked through a posh community with ma track suit they'll ask questions, 'who's he?' and 'what's he daein' here?' like, what's the problem? They just see us as the people that run about wild in the streets, they dinnae actually know what is going on, they just see us as 'they dinnae dae anything, they just cause trouble.' If ah was walking about in jeans and a shirt, ah wouldnae be a chav, ah'd be a normal person, you know, wear tracksuits, wear trainers, be daft in the streets. Some people, people that wear fake makes, that was, years ago that was a chav, trying to be what you're not, fake makes or wears loads of gold, hoop earrings or big sovvies, these days no-one wears them, well apart from some casuals, but if ah was in an argument with a posh, mair upper class person ah would get called a chav, but ah'm no a chav.

But I should be alright, I want to make a few changes...(long pause)...like, changes, hard to explain the things you want to change...(long pause)...ah'd like to start ma ain business and, you never know if it's gonna be successful so you always need a back-up plan. I want to have ma ain business, gardener, landscaper, to have ma business, and that it's doing well, then, and have a sustainable life, like life is fine, a good life and that everything is going alright. I would like to have my own house, aye still in Porttown, in fact, you know what, this is the truth, if I could, if the council let you buy houses, I would buy the house i'm in and do it up. I would let my Mum stay and I would like a car and a partner, dinnae want bairns, want to live ma life, ah want to have a life, not going oot all the time if you're running your own business though, you cannae be no responsible or the business wouldn't last. Money. Money is the big thing 'cos opening a gardening business, people think it's just cutting grass and hedges but it's much more than that. Money's a big thing, but it's not a priority but it's just ah like to have money, someone that says they dinnae dae anything for money are lying, point blank lying. You cannae just go and volunteer, you wouldnae have anything. I dunno like...\*sighs\* ...ah dinnae ken, got quite a lot but you just have to roll with it and sort out what's important. Ah

need to figure out getting a new job, to figure out what's going on with college, random stuff that you just have to deal with. Life.

## Appendix 7 – Leaflet for young people (Front)



### About me

My name is Alan and I am a research student at the University of Edinburgh.

If there is anything you are unsure of – about the research – then please just get in touch with me.

My e-mail address is  
[Alan.Mackie@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Alan.Mackie@ed.ac.uk)

My office is at the Moray House School of Education – which is part of the University of Edinburgh



I am interested in the lives of young people. I have worked with young people for over ten years and hope that my research project can – in some way – help us all to better understand their lives in this messy world. And help further their claims for social justice.

### Any Questions?

I will be organizing a presentation of the final report especially for the young people involved and you will be invited to attend. This will take place at the conclusion of the study.

If you have any questions or want more information, please just ask.

Throughout this research I aim to treat all participants with the courtesy, respect and dignity that we should all expect.

If you are unhappy about anything please just let me know. Alternatively you can contact  
[Jim.Crowther@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Jim.Crowther@ed.ac.uk)



### Social Justice and Young People

Researching issues affecting young people after leaving school



Information leaflet



## Appendice 7 – Leaflet for young people (Reverse)



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
The Moray House School  
of Education

### Information about the Project and what you need to know if getting involved.



#### About the Project

The main aim of this project is to look at the lives of young people as they leave school and move towards becoming independent adults. I plan to do this through conducting one-to-one interviews with young people aged between 16 and 24 living in Porttown.

I will also be interviewing adults working with young people to ask them about their work and explore some of the challenges they face.

The findings of my project should help us to understand these issues more fully and identify how young people can be better supported as they grow up in this complex world.

#### What will I be asked to do?

If you are interested in participating in this study I will meet with you to arrange an interview.

This will involve one interview (maybe two) – and these will not last any more than 2 hours. The interview will be with me and take place in private, in a location of your choosing.

I will be asking questions about your experiences growing up and since leaving school.



#### Do I need to get involved?

You don't have to take part if you do not want to. And you can stop any time you like if you do decide to take part.

If there are questions that you do not feel comfortable answering, you are free to say so – and this will be respected.

**Participation is voluntary**

#### How will my information be used?

Your answers may appear in my final report. Your real name will not be used and every effort will be made to ensure you cannot be identified in any publications or documents.

I will record interviews with a digital recorder to make sure what you say is recorded accurately.

The recordings will only be accessed by me and the project supervisors who also work in the University of Edinburgh.



## Appendice 8 - Consent Form

Project Title: **Participatory Parity, Social Justice and Young People**

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet provided for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason
- I understand that information given in the interview may be used in future publications, reports or presentations
- I understand that any personal data that could be used to identify me will be removed from the transcript and that I will not be identified in any publications, reports or presentations

☐☐☐☐

Participant's name (Printed).....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Researcher's signature.....

Date.....

**THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY**